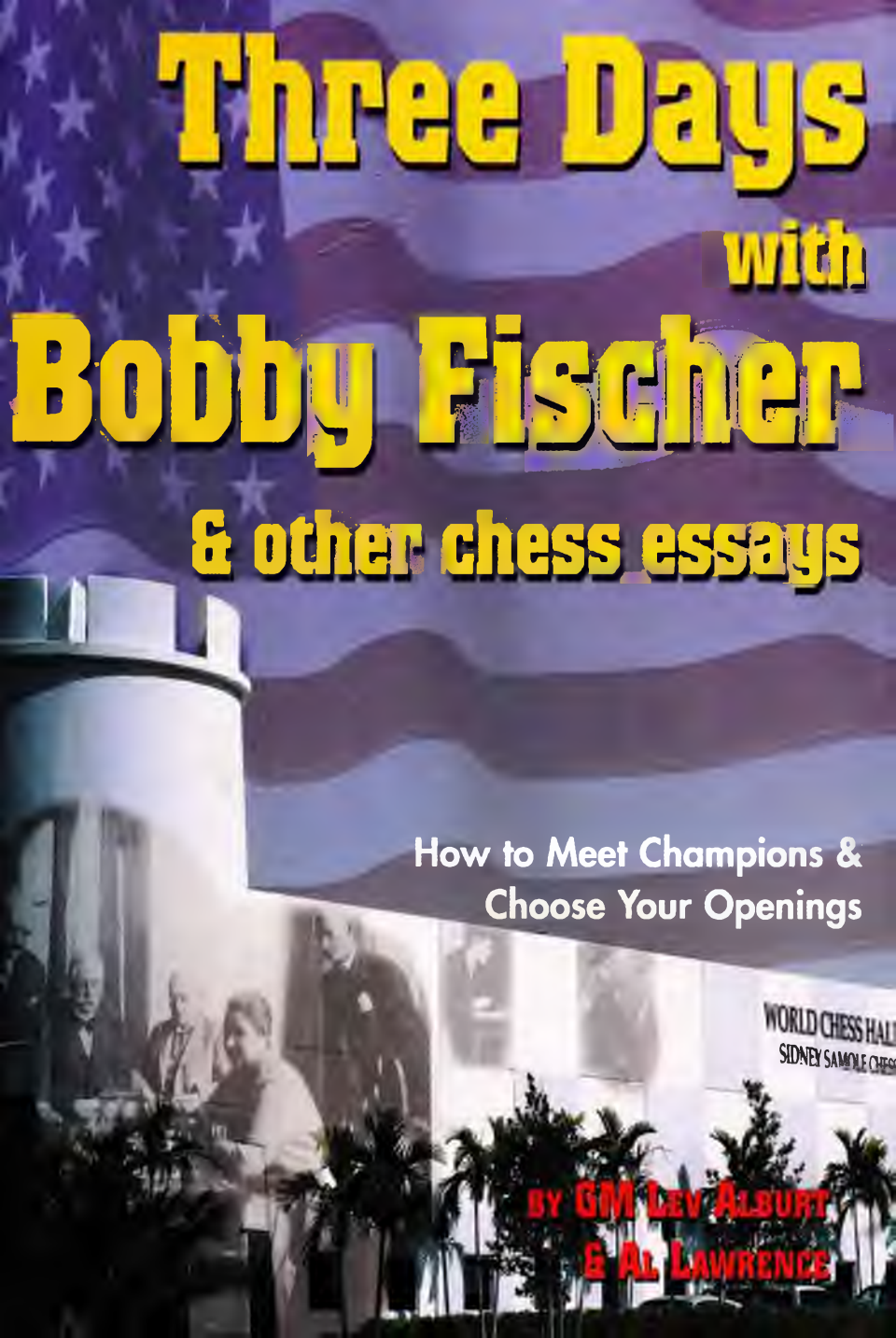




Three Days **with** **Bobby Fischer** **& other chess essays**

**How to Meet Champions &
Choose Your Openings**

**BY GM LEV ALBURT
& AL LAWRENCE**

Three Days with Bobby Fischer

& other chess essays

**How to Meet Champions
& Choose Your Openings**

**by International Grandmaster Lev Alburt
& Al Lawrence**

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Note to the Reader

You should be able to read a chess book without squinting, without forever flipping pages back and forth to find the relevant diagram, and without trying to keep a 12-move variation in your head.

We've tried to produce *Three Days with Bobby Fischer & other chess essays* in a way that makes it enjoyable for you to get the most out of the unique instruction it contains. One hundred twenty-one diagrams certainly make it easier. Whenever possible, we made sure that the moves and the diagrams they relate to are on the same page-spread.

Look for **blue** diagrams and **blue** breakouts that call your attention to the most important positions and most interesting ideas. This highlighted information will be especially worth revisiting and, sometimes, even committing to memory.

Main lines are clearly set off in **bold** type. Diagrams related to main lines are larger than analysis and side-line diagrams, which are clearly labeled "**ANALYSIS**."

In fact, in producing *Three Days with Bobby Fischer & other chess essays*, we used many techniques to make following along and learning easier and more fun.

Three Days with Bobby Fischer & other chess essays uses the now universal algebraic system of chess notation. For more on notation, see page 7.

On the cover: the World Chess Hall of Fame & Sidney Samole Museum, just off the Florida Turnpike in Miami. OutExcel! Corp. Art Director Jami Anson has decorated the front of the building with three world champions and the first great woman player; (l. to r.) Jose Raul Capablanca playing Vera Menchik with specators, Bobby Fischer, Mikhail Botvinnik.

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& other chess essays

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Introduction

Chess, its history, its champions, its tournaments and its characters are fun. Reading about chess should be fun as well, and this book, we hope, makes that possible. You can read this book without ever setting up a chessboard!

Chess can also be studied—to many players, this side of chess is where the fun is. This book contains great games and lessons from the champs that will appeal to this more serious 64-square adventurer.

Nearly everyone interested in chess shares the same two questions:

What were the great champions like?

How can I choose opening moves that gives me a good game?

In the following pages, we answer these questions—and tell a bit about the intriguing, inspiring and sometimes downright bizarre behind-the-scenes stories of the chess greats and near-greats, and how, above all else, they were men of their times.

Three Days with Bobby Fischer and other chess essays: How to Meet Champions and Choose Your Openings is largely taken from the award-winning online (at www.ChessCafe.com) monthly columns by Albur and Lawrence.

Lev Albur

Al Lawrence

New York City, September 19, 2003

Chess Notation

You can read—and we hope, enjoy—most of this book without knowing anything about chess. But to read the moves of a game, chess players around the world use “notation,” a universal system for reading and writing chess. It’s quick to learn, and once you know it, you’ll be able to decipher quickly any book or newspaper article on chess.

The vertical columns of squares that run up and down the board are lettered. The horizontal rows of squares that run sideways are numbered. Where the columns and rows intersect gives the square its name. Let’s look at a board on which every square’s address is given.

a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1

To make writing and reading fast, each piece is assigned a single letter. In English, we use these:

King = K	Bishop = B	Rook = R
Queen = Q	Knight = N	

We normally don’t mention the pawn, just the square it moves to. For more on chess notation, see *The Comprehensive Chess Course, volume 1*.

You’ll catch onto this system very quickly, even if you’ve never read a chess book before. The frequent diagrams in the book will help you check your chessboard against the actual game.



Al Lawrence

Author and co-author of 10 books on a variety of subjects, Al Lawrence .

has been at the center of the chess scene since the early 1980s. He's friendly with four world champions and has met and talked with several more.

Former USCF Executive Director

Author of ten books

- ◆ CJA Journalist of the year 2000-2001
- ◆ *World Book Encyclopedia* contributor
- ◆ Former college and public school teacher
- ◆ Holder of advanced degrees in instructional techniques
- ◆ President of OutExcel! Corp.
- ◆ CEO of StarFinder, Inc.
- ◆ Executive Director of World Chess Hall of Fame

Lawrence was Executive Director of the U.S. Chess Federation during a decade of innovation and record-breaking growth. A former public school and college teacher with advanced degrees in instructional techniques, he is especially interested in applying modern teaching theory to chess.

He is president of OutExcel! Corporation (Email: OutExcel@aol.com), a marketing and publishing firm. He is also Chief Executive Officer of StarFinder, Inc. (Skyfind@aol.com), which develops and patents products that make it easy for amateur stargazers to learn and enjoy the night sky. StarFinder's "Night Navigator" has been featured internationally in magazines and on television. Lawrence was selected as "Journalist of the Year" for 2000-2001 by the Chess Journalists of America.

Lawrence is currently Executive Director of the World Chess Hall of Fame in Miami. You can reach him at ChessMuseum@aol.com.

Lev Alburt

GM Alburt lived for many years in Odessa, a Ukrainian city located on the Black Sea. He won the highly competitive Ukraine championship three times, in 1972-1974. He won the European Cup Championship twice, in 1976 and 1979.

In the days when there were still a Berlin wall and a tight KGB-guard on “Soviet” GMs, Alburt defected while at a tournament in then West Germany.

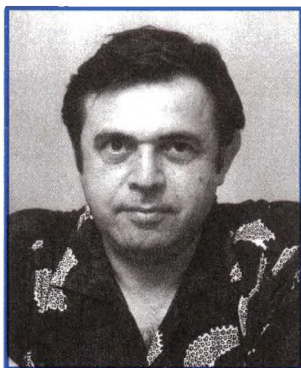
In 1979, he came to the U.S., making his home in New York City. He won the U.S. Championship an impressive three times—in 1984, 1985 and 1990.

Famous for providing aspiring players easy access to master-level ideas, Alburt is the only top-echelon GM to devote his career to teaching non-masters.

The Comprehensive Chess Course, which he co-authored and published, is a long-time best seller.

Lev provides lessons through-the-mail, over-the-telephone, and face-to-face. Write to GM Lev Alburt at PO Box 534, Gracie Station, New York, NY, 10028, or call him at (212) 794-8706.

Alburt and Lawrence, from opposite sides of the old “Iron Curtain,” have been writing partners and friends for two decades.



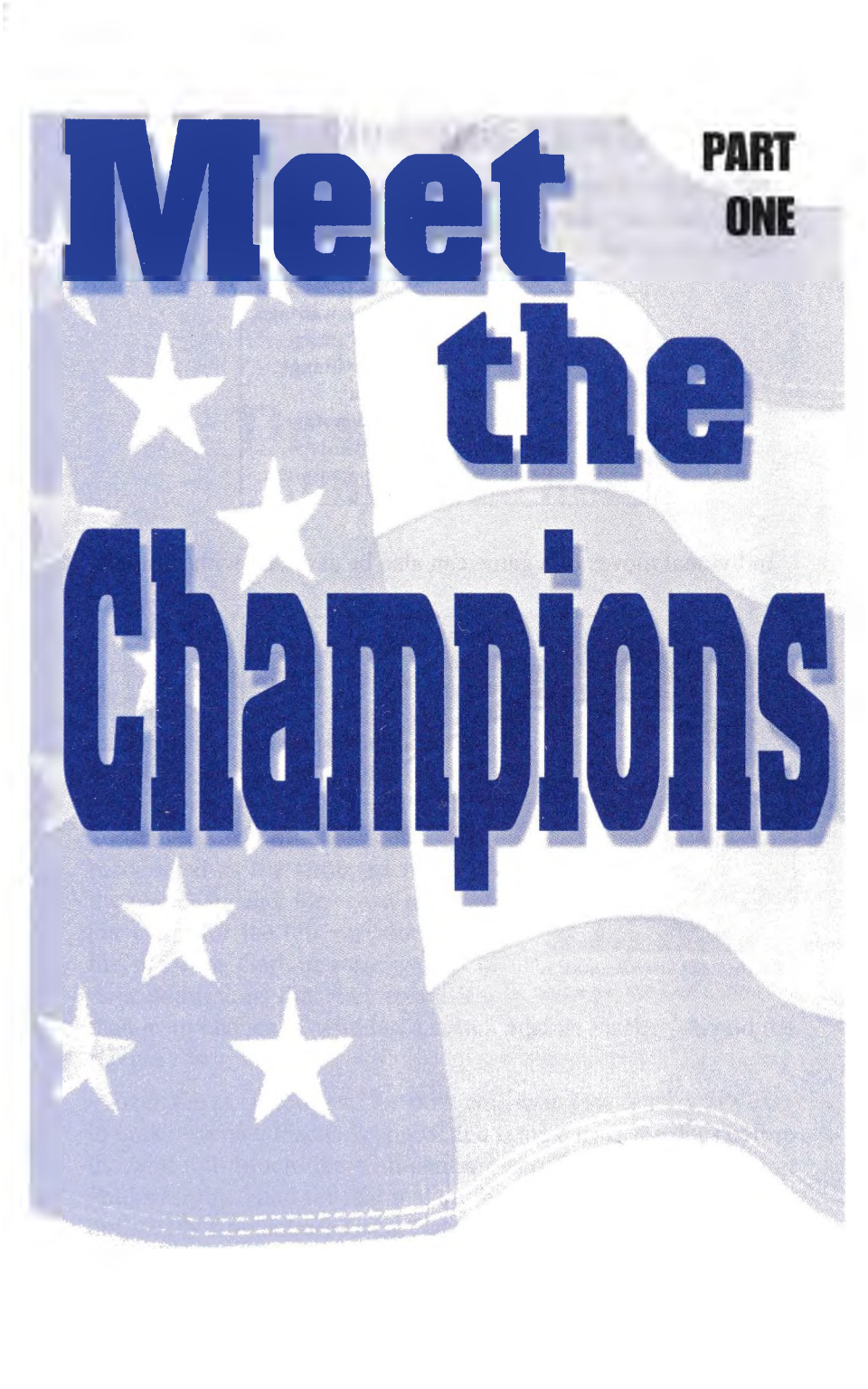
Renowned player, teacher and writer

Mentored by world champion & pre-eminent teacher Mikhail Botvinnik

- ◆ **Three-time US Champion:**
1984, 1985, 1990
- ◆ **Twice US Open Champion:** 1987, 1989
- ◆ **Three-time Ukraine Champion:**
1972-74
- ◆ **Popular Chess Life Columnist**
- ◆ **Inductee in U.S. Hall of Fame**

Our thanks for the U.S. Chess Federation (www.uschess.org)
for the use of the photos throughout this book.
The U.S. Chess Federation is the membership organization for
chess players of all levels, from beginner to grandmaster.
For information on USCF membership, please see page 114.

Thanks also to the World Chess Hall of Fame
(www.worldchesshalloffame.org) for letting us use photos
of its building and displays.
For information on Hall membership, please see page 106.

The background of the entire page is a faded, grayscale image of the United States flag, showing the stars and stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

Meet the Champions

**PART
ONE**

Some Chess Symbols

In chess literature, the assessment of an entire position is commonly expressed with one of a number of symbols. Here are the most common:

+−	White has a decisive advantage.
±	White has a clear advantage.
±	White has a slight advantage.
=	The chances are equal.
±	Black has a slight advantage.
±	Black has a clear advantage.
−+	Black has a decisive advantage.

Individual moves of a game can also be assessed with symbols:

!!	A very good move
!	A good move
?	A weak move
??	A blunder
!?	An interesting or provocative move, often involving some risk
?!	A dubious move

Chapter 1

Three Days with Bobby Fischer

In 1981, Robert J. Fischer was living in Pasadena, California, and hadn't played a single game of rated chess in nine years since his widely covered world-championship victory over the Soviet Union's Boris Spassky. The drop-out champ was still recognized as the strongest player in the world. Indeed, for years, top players vying for the title on both sides of the old Iron Curtain were candid in their admissions that they had a less than even chance of winning a match against Fischer, should the recluse resurface.



*A young Robert Fischer with
chess teacher Jack Collins*

From the perspective of the post-cold-war 21st century, it's easy to underestimate Fischer's appeal and fame during the days before the wall fell. Much like 19th-century, unofficial world champion Paul Morphy—and for that matter, the archetypal celebrity drop-out, 1930s film actress Greta Garbo—Fischer only magnified his

legend with his version of Garbo's "I-vant-to-be-alone" self-imposed isolation. Add to all of this the popular perception that Bobby had been the lone cold-war marshal, a sort of chessboard Wyatt Earp, without the need of brothers or a Doc Holiday, blowing smoke from the long barrel of this six-shooter after ridding the town of Soviet Clansky brothers. We begin to understand the 70s and 80s Fischermania and can see how his disappearance only piqued the compulsiveness of those who stalked him.

THE END OF A BEGINNING

OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP



Viktor Korchnoi

Since the mid-1970s, all sorts of luminaries wanted to meet with Bobby. Then world champion candidate, and political refugee from the USSR, Viktor Korchnoi was one of those few who actually made the pilgrimage. The two apparently got along famously during their get-together. It was only after Viktor, an unabashed lover of the free press, gave an interview about their meeting that Fischer balked, and quite politely. He wrote a letter to Viktor, reminding him that they had agreed to keep their meeting private, and asking him to refrain from further press conferences on the topic. GM Lev Alburt saw Bobby's letter as well as Viktor's adamant reply. Against Lev's advice, the author of *Persona Non Grata* sent a reply characteristically prickly in his disagreement, writing in part that if Fischer didn't value the free press, then they had nothing in common. Of course, this was the end of the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

A steady stream of others, less known and normally less successful in their goal, tried to get close to Bobby: those with something to sell, those looking to make a buck as the great man's agent, those wanting a chess lesson from the best of all time, those who simply wanted to hang out with a legend. Dutch millionaire Arnfried Pagel made one of the strangest, most revealing and most successful visits with Bobby, and Pagel certainly got

more than he bargained for.

TRUTH IN ADVERTISING

Fischer certainly hadn't capitalized on his early 70s fame in a way that is *de rigeur* these days; the well-circulated stories of his refusal to endorse products he didn't consider the very best, regardless of the munificence of the honorarium, are well founded. Leroy Dubeck, USCF president during the period 1970-1973, the years when Fischer was a hot commodity, accepting the key to New York City from Mayor Lindsay, appearing on Johnny Carson, and chatting with president Nixon on the telephone, recalls that Fischer's frustrated agent would complain about Bobby's capitalistic-contrarian ethics. When a luxury car manufacturer offered the idea of a television commercial showing him demonstrating the auto's smooth ride by playing chess on the road in a well appointed back seat, Fischer considered it while evidently having himself chauffeured around town in top-dollar cars of different types. Ultimately, he informed his agent that he wouldn't do the gig, not because the money wasn't right, but because he felt a different brand offered a superior ride. When a top soft-drink company offered him a bubbly sum for filming a commercial in which he found the brand's taste to be, like himself, the world's best, he insisted on time to think it over. The flavor flunked his private taste-test comparison.



Robert Fischer

Perhaps Bobby had spent too much time unearthing the Truth of the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn variation. It was hard to fall out of the truth-searching habit in time to cash in on the celebrity status his research and talent had won him. The concrete analysis regarding which car gave the smoothest backseat ride and what soda tasted best to him was right up his open file even if later, the more abstract concept of how a repressive government could gain prestige and attention from his cooperation would prove elusive.

The agent who worked with Bobby on these matters is a bit of



**AFTER COLLECTING
THEIR MILLION-DOLLAR
PAYOFFS, FISCHER AND
FRIEND BORIS SPASSKY
WERE AGAIN FLUSH.**

a story of his own. After Bobby won the world championship, the agent asked Fischer for permission to act in his name to line up some endorsements. The fellow would collect a standard percentage, which would be his first paycheck as Bobby's longtime free attorney. The Champ agreed, after pointing out symbolically that he wasn't about to "promote underwear." Despite Bobby's pernickety reception of proposals, his attorney did quickly put together several very significant deals that met with championship approval, including one for approximately a million dollars and one for about \$600,000. The treasure-ship had apparently docked for the two of them. The lawyer prepared the contracts for signature, but one final problem separated him from their mutual retirement in luxury. The day Bobby was scheduled to come into the man's New York City office to sign the papers was the same, infamous day that Bobby dropped out of chess and the public eye for nearly two decades, to later be spotted in Pasadena, California. The lucrative contract offers were good for a limited time, of course. We can only imagine the attorney's wry despondency when he had to tear up the papers.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT NEAR BEVERLY HILLS

It's also true that Bobby wasn't the most successful conservator of his winnings. Between the World Wide Church of God and his own lack of investment acumen and motivation, Bobby didn't retain his then record 1972 winnings for very long. In fact, Fischer and big money just didn't seem destined for each other. Two decades later in 1992, after collecting their million-dollar payoffs from Yugoslav pyramid-schemer-banker Jezdimir Vasiljevic, Fischer and friend Boris Spassky were again flush. Bobby's take alone was more than three million U.S. Spassky (who admit-

ted blowing his 1972 winnings, what was then in the Soviet Union a vast fortune, in the following two years) immediately deposited his new riches in a Swiss bank.



Robert Fischer versus Boris Spassky

But Bobby liked Vasiljevic; the American legend apparently re-deposited his winner's share in the organizer's own Jugoskandic Bank. Of course, this same bank soon went bust, and Vasiljevic fled to Israel, where he was apprehended absconding with an amount approximately equal to Bobby's loot. (We'll see that it wasn't the first time Bobby's "benefactors" went to jail.)

Along with thousands of others standing in the withdrawal line, Fischer simply lost out. This is the widely repeated story as Lev heard it, although Fischer himself has denied, in later internet postings, that he lost his prize money.

But in 1981 in Pasadena, Fischer preferred to live frugally anyway, and he did have occasional "clients," those who paid very well for the privilege of a lesson or just a conversation, sometimes simply over the telephone. An old friend who was close to him in this period of the 70s and 80s said that Bobby got \$1,000 to \$1,500 for a brief telephone consultation.

**HE WOULDN'T DO THE GIG, NOT
BECAUSE THE MONEY WASN'T RIGHT,
BUT BECAUSE HE FELT A
DIFFERENT AUTO OFFERED
A SUPERIOR RIDE.**





*IM Shernaz Mistry-Kennedy
with her husband NM John
Kennedy and children Elizabeth
and John, Jr.*

Co-author Lawrence recalls that in the 80s, the U.S. Chess Federation had brief contact with Fischer through his new intermediary, the American woman (originally from India), New York City chess player and teacher Shernaz Mistry-Kennedy—a wonderful maiden name for one doing undercover work. In this case, the proposed rates were much higher—\$10,000 for about 10 minutes. Bobby may have reasoned that the USCF owed him and had a lot to gain commercially. USCF couldn't afford the toll, but

did send Bobby once again, through the “safeguard” of his intermediary, a desktop computer, and arranged for the delivery of chess software and other materials.

At any rate, Bobby had a source of income that met his immediate needs. What was his major expense? Checking out would-be clients. Under the circumstances, an entirely reasonable priority.

MEANWHILE, BIG PLANS IN LITTLE BERGEN

Enter Arnfried Pagel, a handsome and well educated, fortyish German expatriate who in the early 80s enjoyed the high life in the Netherlands, in the small town of Bergen-aan-Zee. (Bergen, by the way, was the same town in which the 1975 FIDE Congress failed to approve Fischer's non-negotiable demand that the champion retain his title if a match was tied at nine wins each.) Pagel was wealthy—ostensibly as a result of his construction company, but there were widespread rumors of his less orthodox, and less legal, pursuits. Pagel was a chess fan, and he was above all else an eccentric, and one who cultivated and prided himself on his eccentricity. He loved to create publicity stunts. Although the Dutch press frequently ridiculed him, he was of the opinion that

even the worst publicity was great.

“Uncle” Arnfried sponsored a Bergen chess team, Koenings Club, in the popular Dutch league that attracted hundreds of clubs. He envied the famous teams that featured Jan Timman and other top GMs, like Team Volmac, sponsored by Joop Van Oosterom, now organizer of the famous Melody Amber tournaments held in Monaco. But Pagel's team was still down in one of the very bottom divisions. Pagel, however, had faith in the power of money and began to recruit outstanding professional players. He sought advice from GM Lev Alburt, who told him, for instance, that the Brazilian “grandmaster” Pagel thought he had hired was only an expert-strength player. Lev and the Brazilian led their teammates, most of them the equivalent of USCF 900 to 1500 players, to the sectional championship that season. The team moved up a division. Eventually, after following Lev's advice and adding Dmitry Gurevich, Sergey Kudrin and Yasser Seirawan to Koenings Club Bergen's roster, Pagel got his team to the very top. Like any good entrepreneur, however, he wanted more. In fact, he sought the ultimate coup for his club and himself, a publicity stunt like no other imaginable in chess. He wanted Robert J. Fischer, who was 5,500 miles away and thoroughly investigating all who would approach.

DUTCH TREATS AND SOUTH AFRICAN KRUGERRANDS

Pagel turned again to Alburt, who got in touch with Bobby through Fischer's old friend, West Coast chess master James Buff, by now a friend of Lev's as well. Buff told Lev that Fischer was in terrific form, that he had been annihilating GM Peter Biyasis at blitz, and that Bobby kept up on everything in chess. Buff wanted to help his old friend.

For a while the intermediaries Alburt and Buff made and relayed substantial offers and replies. Pagel offered \$100,000 for a meeting and Fischer's joining the Koenings Club. For some reason, Fischer was fixated on being paid in South African Gold Krugerrands. Talk of his playing a computer followed. Despite

numerous telegraph messages and phone calls between Alburt and Buff, progress was slow. Characteristically, Fischer wanted more.

Then suddenly, Fischer wrote in his own hand to Pagel that they should step from behind their representatives and correspond directly. Uncle Arnfried thus knew that Fischer wanted to speed up the process. On Lev's advice, Pagel made an uncomplicated

offer to begin with. Pagel told Bobby that the



Louis Statham

Dutchman would come to Pasadena and pay \$50,000 just for a brief meeting of several hours. If other, bigger things worked out, there would be much more money to come.

In 1981 Pagel flew to Los Angeles to meet Bobby. Afterwards, he would visit Alburt and Koenings Club Bergen's other top team members in Lone Pine, California, a little town unknown except as the site of the lavish chess generosity of Louis Statham. Until his death, Statham sponsored a series of world-class events in Lone Pine, bringing in GMs from all over the world to that sleepy western town—where tanned, cowboy hat- and boot-wearing locals and the pasty chess players regarded each other with mutual curiosity.

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS CHEAT

Fischer is, of course, the consummate outsider. Pagel, a man who knew how to play to an audience and who, despite enjoying the good life, loved to be seen as a character himself, adopted the status of fellow outsider. Quickly the two men bonded. What was to be a brief meeting of two to three hours turned into a three-day chess carouse. Instead of the multi-star restaurants normal for Pagel, the two hung out in the anonymous all-night diners and coffee shops that Fischer preferred. In these, his risk of being recognized and accosted was reduced. The new friends talked about Bobby's well-known and, for most, repulsive world view, and they

played blitz. Pagel later boasted that he won some games, but his entourage privately contradicted the improbable claim. In fact, these traveling assistants even pointed out that Pagel tried to cheat, but Bobby wouldn't let him. It was clear to all that the two men genuinely liked each other.

Affection aside, Pagel was not one to pay the piper without getting Polaroids. Unknown to Bobby, who had undoubtedly stipulated that no pictures be taken, Pagel had hired a private investigator to follow the two around, snapping shots, many showing the pair's moments together. Later Pagel showed the photos to Lev Alburt, who was struck by the range of emotions a bearded Bobby exhibited. Lev sympathized with Fischer's predicament. The pictures revealed the chess-savvy champion showing a child-like acceptance of Uncle Arnfried. Indeed, some photos showed the two arm-in-arm. Other shots showed Bobby growing suspicious of a possible photographer. One print even revealed Fischer, hands-in-front-of-his-face, recoiling in horror at having a camera pointed at him at close range. The purloined photos showed Pagel at all times enjoying himself. Whether or not these photos were ever published, we don't know. Their location and current ownership are also unknown.

FRIENDS DON'T PAY RETAIL

At the end of the bargained-for meeting of a few hours, Fischer and Pagel sat down to settle up. Arnfried opened up his ever-present briefcase, always stocked with cash, reaching in to retrieve, one after the other, five paper-banded bundles, each containing 100 hundred-dollar bills. The agreed-upon \$50,000 was on the table. Bobby looked at the cash, looked at Uncle Arnfried, clapped him on the shoulder, and smiled. Witnesses reported he said words to the effect of "You're a good guy. I like you. Twenty thousand will do it." Bobby nudged three of the stacks back toward Pagel, who quietly placed the \$30,000 back in his case. Bobby spent, at no charge, the extra two days with his new friend, roaming the streets and 24-hour cafes of Pasadena. In fact Pagel said that he could have spent more time with Bobby, but grew tired of their meetings.



"I like you. Twenty thousand will do it." Bobby nudged three of the stacks back toward Pagel, who quietly placed the \$30,000 back in his case.

Is this friendly generosity from the demanding capitalist who nearly drove the Reykjavik organizers and the U.S. Chess establishment mad with anxiety during the 1972 match hard to understand? Boris Spassky admires and respects Bobby, and remains his friend to this day. He probably understands Fischer better than anyone else in the world. When told the story of Fischer and Pagel, Spassky's reaction was that Bobby's behavior was not surprising at all to those who really knew him. In fact, Spassky said, "It is typical Bobby!" If he likes someone, he will work for far less than his going rate. If he doesn't like someone, he won't cooperate for even ten times the amount.

HEADLINES IN HOLLAND

Back home in Bergen, Pagel arranged a press release claiming that Bobby Fischer had joined his club, commenting that Koenings Club Bergen's Team had no need of Bobby's great skills at the moment, but at some key match in the future, Fischer may well play. The impact? The major Dutch newspapers ran headlines. Typical was this banner:

FISCHER JOINS KOENINGS CLUB BERGEN!

The articles normally included an accompanying interview with Uncle Arnfried, eccentric and attention-getting as always. Pagel not only got a friendly discount from Fischer, but also got his publicity stunt free of charge.

IT'S DENOUEMENT ALL OVER THE PLACE

Dutch grandmaster and popular chess writer Hans Ree remembers hearing of Pagel's continuing adventures, which weren't as successful or nearly as much fun. Dutch authorities looking into financial improprieties pursued Uncle Arnfried. Unable to prove these charges, they nevertheless managed to convict him of illegal gun possession, for which he received what is a long sentence for that crime in Holland, one year. Because Pagel had already done this much time awaiting trial, he was released. He left Holland, living for a while in Oostende, Belgium. A few years later, he was convicted in England of drug smuggling. Evidently, the illegal substances were hidden within building materials, shipped between the Continent and Britain. Presumably, the unusual round-trips made by Pagel's construction supplies aroused the suspicion of British investigators. We don't know how Pagel judged their publicity value, but the reports chronicled a sad end.

According to the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool*, this time Uncle Arnfried received a stiff, double-digit sentence. He was rumored to have died while in jail. (*Update: To Albur's great relief, these rumors proved false. Pagel re-emerged in Holland several years later and even took part in a television show. The central subject of the show was, of course, Pagel. He now resides—in style, as usual—in Berlin.*)

Bergen no longer has a championship chess team. The Koenings Club team played on for no fees for a season after Pagel's Dutch imprisonment. Then its boards reverted to local, lower-rated players; then the team disbanded.

Of course Bobby never really played for Koenings Club or anyone else, until his controversial 1992 “championship” reprise with Boris Spassky in Sveti Stefan, Montenegro, and Belgrade, Serbia. On March 9, 2003, Bobby was 59, two years older than Lasker when the wizened champ amazed the chess world by handling the youngsters at New York 1924.

Fischer's prejudices were entrenched, and he remained capri-

ciously hard to meet. In 1992, ChessBase USA president Don Maddox was asked to send Bobby his firm's software, the world-standard for chess research. Shernaz Mistry-Kennedy once again served as intermediary. When she told Maddox that Bobby wanted to know Don's religion, "I told her 'Texan'," Maddox said, recalling the incident. The former *Chess Life* editor may have known that the truth would please Fischer, but on principle refused to capitulate to such asininity. At Fischer's invitation, Maddox made a special trip to Los Angeles during the 1992 U.S. Open to help Bobby learn how to use ChessBase. But Bobby learned that Maddox had used the "K" words, mentioning both Karpov and Kasparov in ads for the software, and even that the now chess entrepreneur formerly headed the "enemy's" magazine, *Chess Life*, the official publication of the U.S. Chess Federation. "The Ghost of Fischer," as some of the participating GMs referred to his haunting presence at the event, failed to materialize.

Perhaps that was the last opportunity Fischer had to stand up a date, at least in the U.S. Since his 1992 rematch, Bobby has lived abroad, fugitive from indictment issued by the U.S. government, from whom it's doubtful he'll be offered a friendly discount.

(Update: After 9/11, Fischer, as a call-in guest on a Philippine radio station, made heartless and anti-American statements in support of the attack on the World Trade Center. To many—even to former hero-worshippers and to his biographer Frank Brady—he has become a pariah. Yet he remains the best-known chess player in the world.

We share their disappointment and disgust. We note that if we burned the paintings done by the morally wanting and the books written by those we'd hesitate to invite to a family dinner, there would be many a blank wall at the Louvre and empty shelf at the Library of Congress. So enjoying a Bobby Fischer brilliancy, a result of his unique chess genius, remains as legitimate as enjoying a symphony by Richard Wagner or a canto by Ezra Pound.)

Chapter 2

Standing Tal: Mikhail, Yin; Bobby, Yang

To several current generations of chess players, Mikhail Nekhemyevich Tal was muse. At the close of the 1950s, chess was entrenched in a sort of “scientific determinism” of positional play. Modern defensive technique and strategy had seemed to long ago put an end to the 19th-Century fireworks of Adolf Anderssen and Paul Morphy. Chess on a high level was seen as simply too “correct” to allow such nonsense.

World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik, hero of the Soviet Republic and leader of the Russian chess hegemony, claimed only to be “first among equals,” such as compatriots Smyslov and Bronstein. We can almost see a circle of Soviet GMs with white lab coats and clipboards somewhere in an antiseptic chamber in Moscow, squinting with scientific detachment through microscopes at chess positions and scratching out lines of algebra on a chalkboard. Into this exalted Kremlin chess “laboratory” burst young Misha Tal, the irreverent “gangster of the chessboard” (to take a line from Smyslov), shaking up the formulae and stirring in a large beaker full of fun.

June 28, 1992 marks the passing of Mikhail Tal, eighth chess world champion. The Wizard of Riga succumbed in Moscow, at the age of only 55, to a more than 30-year battle against ill health.

DEVELOPING HIS PIECES AND SACRIFICING THEM SOMEWHERE

Tal brought the Heisenberg Principle to chess in the form of the imaginative sacrifice—what he called “fantasy”—, saving us from the dull pomposity of chess as pseudo-science and showing that there was still room for beauty and poetry. Where his contemporaries shuffled, Tal sacrificed. As Ragozin said, “Tal doesn’t move the pieces by hand; he uses a magic wand!” Or, as Bronstein put it, “Tal develops all his pieces in the center and then sacrifices them somewhere.”

Tal was unique, even among world champions. He was unpretentious and disinterested in wielding the influence (in Russian, *vliyaniye*) normally relished by the kingpins of the old Soviet dynasty. Tal also showed that even a chess world champion could be completely free of gravitas and that it was possible for a man to rise to the very top of his profession and not have an enemy in the world.

Born in Latvia on November 9, 1936, Tal was not a child prodigy. When he did begin to ascend, however, he soared so rapidly that in 1957 he was both the youngest Soviet champion ever and a rare case that required FIDE to award him the title of international grandmaster while waiving the normal requirement that it first recognize him as a master!

When Tal beat Botvinnik for the world championship in 1960, he was at the time the youngest world champion ever, full of vigor and brilliance, an uneven, raw talent. Then, within months, he developed what was to become a lifelong illness and handicap to his play. He was found to have a diseased kidney. Ever devoted to chess, Tal would play blitz between rounds of even important tournaments. In the hospital for the removal of the offending organ in 1969, Tal reportedly talked chess until the anesthesia-mask was strapped on! During his convalescence, he would sneak

out of the hospital to play at the local chess club.

SHADES OF RASPUTIN

Some of Tal's GM colleagues found it hard to accept what was happening to them. It was natural for his peers to look for reasons to explain why what seemed "coffee-house" chess was suddenly chalking up wins against them. How could they succumb to such brutal tactics? Some actually thought that they were victims of mesmerism. After all, there was The Stare. The famous story about Pal Benko's wearing dark glasses to avoid being hypnotized by the Wizard is true. It's also true that Tal countered Benko by donning a pair of comically oversized novelty shades he had borrowed from Tigran Petrosian. Misha wore his dark glasses for only a few moves for a laugh from the spectators and the directors, while Benko kept his on until hopelessly lost at move 20, victim of another "hypnotic" performance by Tal. Let's take a peek, being careful of the glare.

PAL BENKO—MIKHAIL TAL

Curacao, 1962

SICILIAN DEFENSE

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bc4 e6 7. Bb3 b5 8. f3 Be7 9. Be3 0-0 10. Qd2 Qc7 11. g4 Nc6 12. Nxc6 Qxc6 13. g5 Nd7 14. Nd5

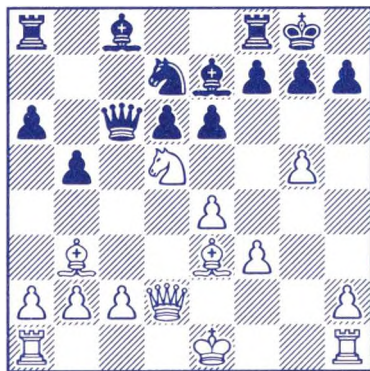


Diagram 1

Tal himself probably won more games with this last move against the Sicilian than anyone else. Is Benko, behind his glasses, holding up a mirror to the Wizard?

Of course the knight is untouchable. If 14. ... exd5, then 15. Bxd5, x-raying the rook.

14. ... Bd8 15. a4 Ne5 16. 0-0 bxa4



Diagram 2

Now neither the rook nor the bishop can recapture. If 17. Rxa4, then 17. ... exd5 18. Bxd5 Qxa4. If 17. Bxa4, then 17. ... Qb7, and Black threatens ... exd5, as well as ... Nc4xe3, with the possibility of ... Bb6, preventing White from recapturing with his queen.

17. Nb4 Qb7 18. Rxa4 Bd7 19. Ra3 Be7 20. Qd4 Rfc8

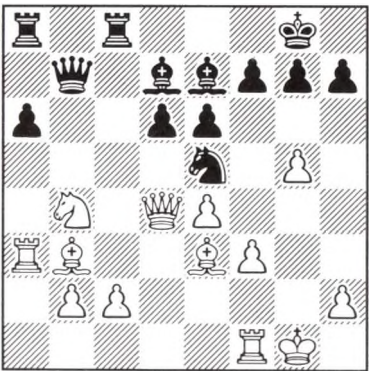


Diagram 3

In a hopeless position, with his pieces forced into awkward posts and with no prospects, Benko has played “through a glass, darkly.” Having ruled out hypnotism, he finally removed his glasses.

21. Bd2 Bb5 22. Rf2 a5 23. Nd3 Nc4

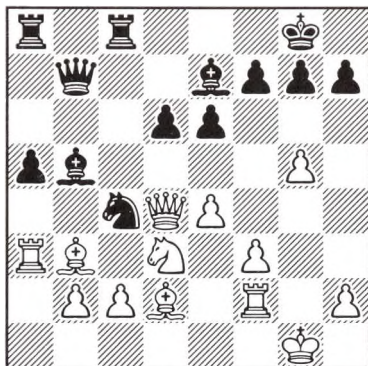


Diagram 4

Black begins to cash in his positional winnings.

24. Bxc4 Rxc4 25. Qe3 Rxc2 26. Bc3 Rxf2 27. Nxf2 Qc7 28. Ra1 Qc4 29. h4 a4 30. Kg2 Rc8 31. Qa7 Bf8 32. Re1 Qb3 33. Qb7??

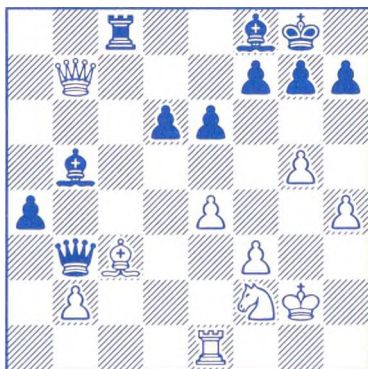


Diagram 5

33. ... Bf1+ 0-1

MIKHAIL, YIN; BOBBY, YANG

Three-time World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik was in a singular position to judge Tal. Botvinnik lost his crown to Tal in 1960 and then won it back from him in 1961. In general, Botvinnik was a man who revered his own opinions (we admit that he had a lot of justification) and was not one to shirk the responsibility of criticizing those who didn't share them. Additionally, Botvinnik preferred to enter an important match with some dislike for his opponent, or at least some psychological distance from him. (We can see this psychology today most frequently in professional boxing matches, framed by threatening glowers during referee instructions and empathetic hugs after the bell.) Botvinnik's complaint about Tal? He confided to Lev Alburt this damning fact: "I couldn't make myself dislike him." For example, when in 1961 Botvinnik, the challenger after all, approached Tal for his thoughts about the lights that the former champ preferred or the set and board he wanted, Tal would say he was sure that anything Botvinnik chose would be just fine.

Tal showed none of the pre-match maneuvering, tension and histrionics that characterized Fischer's off-the-board behavior. In fact, in a sense, Tal put all of his "incorrect" behavior into the moves he played, while Fischer put all of his "correct" behavior into his moves. Fischer, with his ultra-dry classicism, took no deliberate chances on the board and relished the moment he "crushed his opponent's spirit." Tal would sacrifice a piece if he saw no direct refutation, even in a world-championship game! He relished the explosive poetry that he consistently found under the noses of his more practical peers for its own intrinsic beauty.

HOISTING THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

The story Tal tells in his wonderful autobiography, *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*, about his victory over Evgeny Vasiukov in the 1965 Soviet Championship is the perfect illustration of all these traits.

Tal suffered from a cold in addition to his "normal" background of serious ill health. Yet he played to win and finished in a res-

pectable third place. His game against Vasiukov was key. It began:

MIKHAIL TAL—EVGENY VASIUKOV

Kiev, 1965

CARO KANN DEFENSE

1. e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. d4 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nd7 5. Nf3 Ngf6 6. Ng3 e6 7. Bd3 c5 8. 0-0 cxd4 9. Nxd4 Bc5 10. Nf3 0-0 11. Qe2 b6 12. Bf4 Bb7 13. Rad1 Nd5 14. Bg5 Qc7 15. Nh5! Kh8! 16. Be4 f6! 17. Bh4 Bd6 18. c4 Ba6!

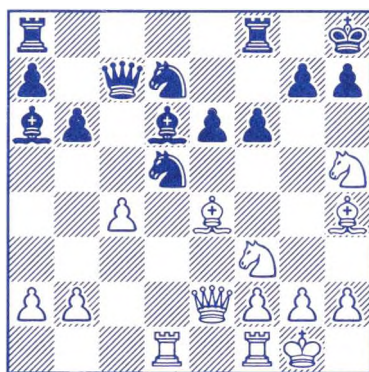
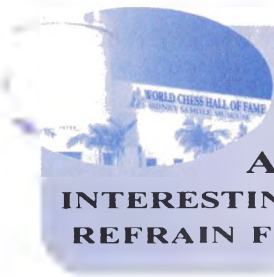


Diagram 6

Black has made some very strong choices, and here Tal knew he was faced with difficult decisions of his own. “How is White to continue?” he writes. Moving the rook to defend the c-pawn is taking a step backward, and Black would still enjoy his pin. Tal points out that if 19. Bd3, Black has 19. ... Nf4 20. Nxf4 Bxf4 21. Qxe6 Nc5, and Black enjoys himself. “The position demands strong measures,” Tal writes, “but 19. Bxh7 is insufficient in view of 19. ... Kxh7 20. Qe4+ Kh8! 21. Qxe6 Bxc4.” Tal began to calculate the knight sacrifice on g7.

“The sacrifice was not altogether obvious, and there was a large number of possible variations, but when I conscientiously began to work through them, I found, to my horror, that nothing would come of it. Ideas piled up one after another. I would transport a subtle reply, which worked in one case, to another situation where it would prove to be quite useless. As a result my head became



**TAL: “THE KNIGHT
SACRIFICE WAS, BY ITS VERY
NATURE, PURELY INTUITIVE.
AND SINCE IT PROMISED AN
INTERESTING GAME, I COULD NOT
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filled with a completely chaotic pile of all sorts of moves, and the famous ‘tree of the variations’, from which the trainers recommend that you cut off the small branches, in this case spread with unbelievable rapidity.

“And then suddenly, for some reason, I remembered the classic couplet by Korney Ivanovich Chukovsky:

*Oh, what a difficult job it was
To drag out of the marsh the hippopotamus.*

“I don’t know from what associations the hippopotamus got onto the chessboard, but although the spectators were convinced that I was continuing to study the position, I, despite my humanitarian education, was trying at this time to work out: just how would you drag a hippopotamus out of the marsh? I remember how jacks figured in my thoughts, as well as levers, helicopters, and even a rope ladder. After a lengthy consideration I admitted defeat as an engineer, and thought spitefully: ‘Well, let it drown!’ And suddenly the hippopotamus disappeared, going off the chessboard just as he had come on—of his own accord! And straightaway the position did not appear to be so complicated.

“Now I somehow realized that it was not possible to calculate all the variations, and that the knight sacrifice was, by its very nature, purely intuitive. And since it promised an interesting game, I could not refrain from making it.

“And the following day, it was with pleasure that I read in the paper how Mikhail Tal, after carefully thinking over the position for 40 minutes, made an accurately calculated piece sacrifice ...”

19. Nxg7! Kxg7

Black has to recapture.

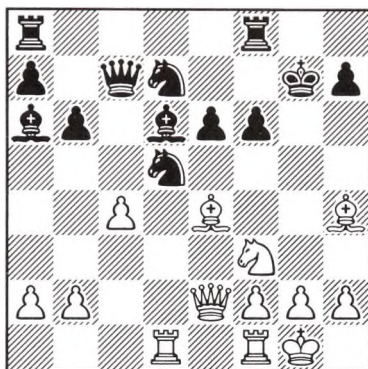


Diagram 7

20. Nd4 Nc5

If instead 20. ... Nf4, then 21. Qd2, and if 21. ... Bxc4, then 22. Nxe6+.

21. Qg4+ Kh8 22. Nxe6 Nxe6 23. Qxe6 Rae8
24. Qxd5 Bxh2+ 25. Kh1 Qf4

The moves have been virtually forced since the knight sac, except for Black's 24. ... Bxh2+. Vasiukov should try 24. ... Qxc4 to force an ending that, although better for White, is likely drawn.



**AS IN MANY OF TAL'S
SACRIFICIAL GAMES,
HIS OPPONENT GROWS
SHORT OF TIME UNDER
THE PRESSURE OF TRYING TO FIND A
SERIES OF BEST DEFENSIVE MOVES.**

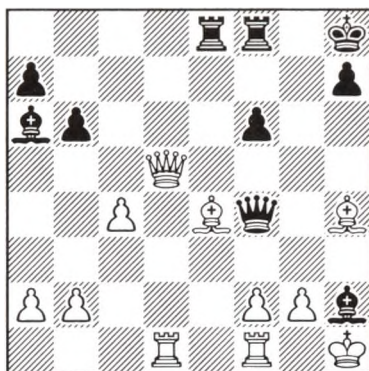


Diagram 8

26. Qh5

Now if 26. ... Rxe4, then White wins with 27. Rd7.

26. ... Qxe4 27. Rfe1

An error that could let the hippo slip back into the marsh. Tal points out that 27. Rde1 is stronger. Now Black gets another chance ...

27. ... Qg6 28. Qxg6 hxg6

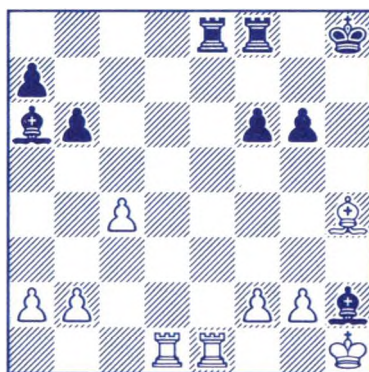


Diagram 9

... but misses it again. The *zwischenzug* 28. ... Rxe1+ draws. As in many of Tal's sacrificial games, his opponent grows short of time under the pressure of trying to find a series of best defensive

moves. Typically, Tal's sacrifices lead to a long-lived initiative, and out-of-time victims have to make momentous decisions in seconds.

29. Bxf6+ Kg8 30. Rxe8 Rxe8 31. Kxh2 Bxc4 32. Rd7

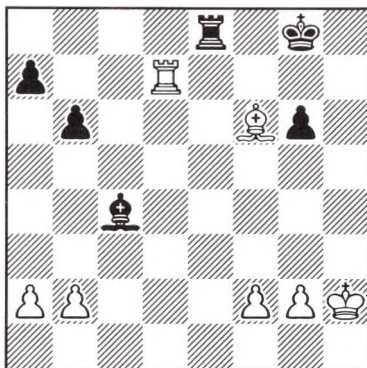


Diagram 10

White's advantage may look ephemeral after all—he's but a pawn up in the dreaded bishops-of-opposite-color ending. Indeed, without the rooks, the position is drawn. But with his rook on the seventh and an unopposed dark-square bishop, Tal advances his king, whips up nothing less than a mating attack, and wins.

32. ... Re6! 33. Bc3 Bxa2 34. Rxa7 Bc4 35. Kg3 Bd5 36. f3 Kf8 37. Bd4 b5 38. Kf4 Bc4 39. Kg5 Ke8 40. Ra8+ Kf7 41. Ra7+ Ke8 (sealed move) 42. b4 Bd5 43. Ra3 Kf7 44. g4 Re2 45. Bc5 Re5+ 46. Kh6 Re6 47. Rd3 Bc6 48. Rd8 Re8 49. Rd4 Re6 50. f4 Ke8 51. Kg7 Be4 52. Bb6 Bf3 53. Rd8+ Ke7 54. Rd3

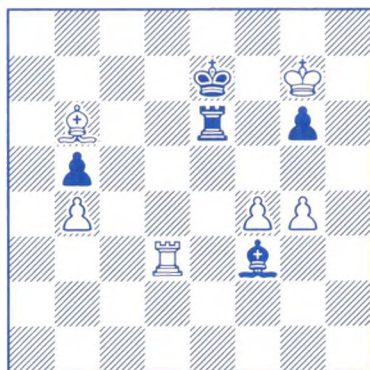


Diagram 11

If 54. ... Bxg4, then 55. Bd8+ Ke8 56. Bg5 and wins.

54. ... Be2 55. Bd8+ Ke8 56. Rd2 Re3 57. Bg5 Bd3 58. f5, Black resigns.

Actually, Lev Alburt had a run-in with the Dreaded Stare. At the start of their first game together, Lev couldn't help but glance up at Misha, whose wide-open brown eyes, topped by their prominent dark brows, were riveted on Alburt. Lev, from a younger, less superstitious generation that had already incorporated Tal's imaginative approach into their own games, reacted as if the stare were some kind of joke, smiling. Tal immediately roused himself from his trance. Never one to distract his opponent on purpose, he remembered Lev's reaction. Alburt was never again the recipient of the Stare. Our conclusion: the much-touted stare was probably only an absent-minded habit.

LIFE AFTER BOTVINNIK

Sometimes it seems that current chess fans think of Tal as washed up after 1961, the year he began to battle his illness and the year Botvinnik took back the crown. It's true that Tal made the greatest accomplishment any chess player could achieve as a very young man. But his love of chess and of competition was lifelong. (Indeed, he preferred to play more than 100 tournament games per year in top-flight competition.) He continued to study. Later he went from a one-sided attacking genius to a complete player of

the highest level. (He joked that he would sometimes look at his old games and laugh, but envy the fact that he could play those old sacrifices because at the time he didn't know better!) But even if Tal had never won the world championship, he would be remembered as one of the greats.

Sound like an overstatement? Let's make a very brief list:

- ◆ From 1949 to 1990, Tal played in 55 strong international round-robins, winning first place in 19 and second in 7!
- ◆ Played in eight Olympiads. In five he scored best-board results, and in three, he scored the best overall results.
- ◆ Won the Soviet championship an unsurpassed six times, a record shared only by Botvinnik.
- ◆ Became a world championship candidate in 1965 and 1968-69.
- ◆ Played 86 games in top-level competition without a loss during 1972-73.
- ◆ Tied for first with Karpov at one of the strongest tournaments ever held, Montreal, 1979.
- ◆ Held a FIDE rating of 2710 in 1979!

And that leaves out his prolific journalism. Many consider Tal the best who ever wrote on chess. He wrote many articles, authored and co-authored several classic books, such as *Tal-Botvinnik, 1960* and the already mentioned *Life and Games*. From 1960 to 1970 he edited the Latvian magazine *Sahs*.

EXTRAORDINARY TALENT, REGULAR GUY

Generosity of spirit was natural to Tal. He seemed interested only in creating the fantastic on the chessboard, not in using the influence his achievements could have given him to wield power among his colleagues. Unlike many of his fellow chess Olympians, he remained unassuming, accessible and good-humored, willing to play chess with all comers. When other world champions would be too conscious of their ranking to indulge relative patzers, Tal would play blitz with nearly anyone. Since the

universal club tradition at speed-chess sessions is that the winner keeps playing and the loser gives up his place, Tal was often to be seen at the board with a long line of players queued up behind his opponent, waiting for their turn against the legend.

When he was relaxing in a local cafe or tavern between rounds wherever chess took him, he was both celebrity and one of the group. Complete strangers would recognize him, of course, and invite him to their table. It would have been more than enough to shake some hands and be pleasant. But Tal would routinely join the group, swapping stories and sharing laughs. No wonder he was loved by the public.

IN THE BLACK

In 1988 Tal won the enormous World Blitz championship in St. John, Canada. In a post-event interview, a journalist referred to him as a current world champion—which could have been technically argued, since the event was billed as a FIDE championship. Tal, however, immediately protested. “I’ve been the world champion,” he said, “and I can tell you that I am not now the world champion.” It was an ironic and subtle reference to Karpov, who, after winning the FIDE action “world championship” in Mazatlan, referred to himself as “world action champion.”

But Tal did accept another benefit of winning at St. John—the \$50,000 first prize. Shortly after the event, he visited Steve Doyle at his Tom’s River, New Jersey, chess club to give a simul. Afterwards, Tal wanted to see Atlantic City. Steve was accommodating, driving Tal to Resorts International, but only after insisting that Tal safely lock up the bundles of cash and checks he was carrying in a safety deposit box in the Tom’s River Holiday Inn. He cajoled Tal into limiting his traveling stash to \$500.

Once at the casino, Tal plopped himself down at the roulette wheel. To Doyle’s dismay, Misha put the entire \$500 on black. But he won. Steve grinned and suggested dinner. Tal left the \$1,000 on black. He won again. Steve tried to convince the champ to set back most of his winnings. After all, Steve, now CFO of a multi-billion-dollar enterprise, had respect for financial security. But

the Wizard let it ride. After winning four in a row on black, he switched to red, but kept betting the house. Two more spins and Tal had amassed \$32,000—truly a fortune in the old Soviet Union, and winnings he would not have to rebate to the authorities, as he would much of his tournament prize. Steve kept pleading, but Tal went for the jackpot one more time—and he lost. Without changing his demeanor, Tal stood up. “Let’s go to dinner,” he said quietly. It turned into a long evening of nightlife.

Afterwards Doyle had to drive them back to Tom’s River, of course. Heading north on the New Jersey Parkway, Steve was overwhelmed with exhaustion at the first rays of sunrise. Pulling over quickly to the shoulder of the highway, he mumbled a quick apology-explanation and immediately fell asleep. On waking up from a 45-minute nap, he looked across at the much older Tal to see him sitting wide-awake in the passenger seat, imperturbably chain-smoking, as always.

HIS LAST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MOVE?

Co-author Al Lawrence was fortunate enough to sit next to Tal at a small table during the final world championship of his lifetime, Kasparov-Karpov, New York, 1990, about two years before Tal’s death. Sipping coffee in the protection of a private meeting room, Tal and Lawrence watched famous GMs comment in turn on the game at an oversized board.

Lawrence was shocked by Tal’s appearance. His illness and his passion had demanded from him a great price. Although only 53, he seemed physically an old and frail man. What hair he had left was white, swirled around his head to cover the most territory and making him look more Merlin-like than ever. He had just traveled halfway around the world by jet, a challenge to even the young and healthy. On top of that, this 30th anniversary of his own unforgettable victory had brought him together with old chess adversaries and old friends. It was clear that his day had already included frequent toasts to past battles. Tal’s prematurely wizened face was heavy-lidded as he hunched over in his gray, double-breasted suit, his elbows on the table, his chin resting in his hands.

The old stare was frankly a bit glazed.

The position after 37 moves showed Kasparov with the initiative, letting a pawn go to build up an attack against Karpov's castled king. A top American GM was taking a turn at our private demonstration board when it became clear the battling K's were reaching a critical point.

GARRY KASPAROV—ANATOLY KARPOV

New York, 1990, Game Six

RUY LOPEZ

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. 0-0 Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 d6 8. c3 0-0 9. h3 Nd7 10. d4 Bf6 11. a4 Bb7 12. axb5 axb5 13. Rxa8 Qxa8 14. d5 Na5 15. Bc2 Nc4 16. b3 Ncb6 17. Na3 Ba6 18. Nh2 c6 19. dxc6 Qxc6 20. Bd2 Be7 21. Ng4 Ra8 22. Ne3 Nf6 23. Nf5 Bf8 24. Bg5 Nbd7 25. c4 bxc4 26. bxc4 Bxc4 27. Nxc4 Qxc4 28. Bb3 Qc3 29. Kh2 h6 30. Bxf6 Nxf6 31. Re3 Qc7 32. Rf3 Kh7 33. Ne3 Qe7 34. Nd5 Nxd5 35. Bxd5 Ra7 36. Qb3 f6 37. Qb8 g6

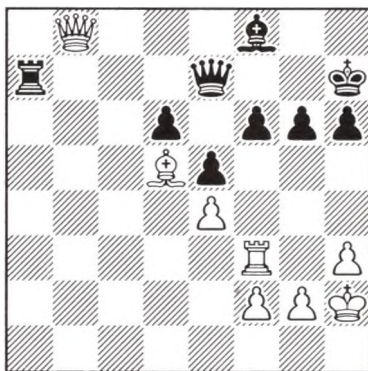


Diagram 12

Al's eyes darted between the position and Tal, covertly checking the ex-champ's face for signs of reaction. Surely, such an attacking game between the current titans stirred the old juices in the Wizard somewhere down deep. Kasparov was now the young attacking genius whose games regularly amazed rooms full of grandmasters. How much of this new genius could the "old" one

follow?

The next Kasparov move was announced and repeated on the big board.

38. Rc3

At the exact moment the piece found its new square, Misha's exhausted stare suddenly twisted into an exaggerated, cartoon-like grimace of pure revulsion. Lawrence thought for a moment that the famous icon might hold his nose and cry "Phew!" Obviously Tal had found the move to be a game-spoiler.

Everyone else for the moment accepted Emperor Garry's new clothes in the form of this "obvious" move, and Tal's face quickly regrouped itself to a guarded stare. But from that point on in the game, Karpov's defense began to take control. Only four moves later, Kasparov sealed his move in a drawn position.

38. ... h5!

The game is suddenly equal.

39. g4 Kh6 40. gxh5 Kxh5 41. Rc8 Bg7 42. Re8, draw.

Later, when the game had been analyzed worldwide, Kasparov's culprit-move was found to be the same one that instantly contorted Tal's face for that revealing moment at the table. The right plan was unearthed: 38. g4!! Is this what Tal saw immediately, jet-lagged and suffering from celebrations? Al bets it is.

Right up until life's last checkmate,



Mikhail Botvinnik

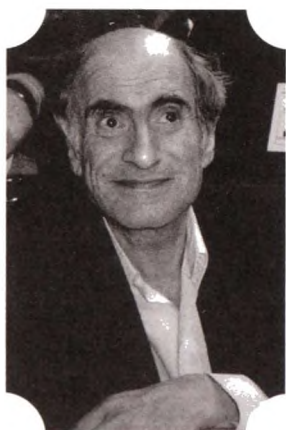
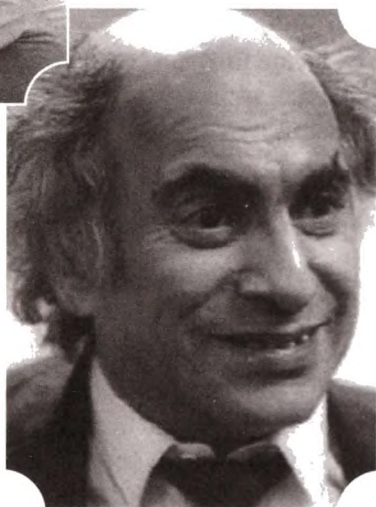
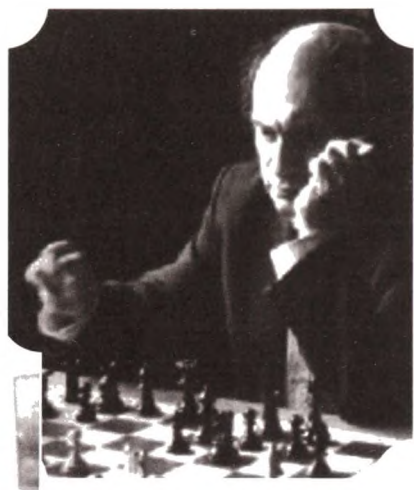


Pal Benko



Mikhail Tal

Mikhail Tal, eighth chess champion of the world, still had the sorcery in his wand and in his eyes. His games will continue to inspire new generations of players to find the swashbuckling and the beautiful in chess.



The many faces of Mikhail Tal ...

Chapter 3

The Books that Came in From the Cold

It's a cold-war spy story complete with smuggled documents detailing closely guarded state secrets. But neither British-intelligence trained agents nor CIA operatives were at the vortex of this international espionage, nor was nuclear armament the subject of the purloined documents. In 1977 a Soviet chess master brought to the West the official, secret plans that were key to what is arguably the Soviet Union's one true success story—its methodically constructed and undisputed supremacy at the chess board.

POWER TO THE PAWNS

The secrets go back to the Bolshevik beginnings, soon after the fall of Czar Nicholas in 1917. Nowadays we think of Russia as having been the pre-eminent chess power forever. Before the Soviet regime and its brutal efficiency in implementing its goals, however, Czarist Russia was just one of several nations that nurtured chess culture. Certainly, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Poland, France, England, as well as the United States and Cuba, all had claim to chess glory. In fact, the participants of the great St. Petersburg invitational tournament of 1914, declared by

Nicholas himself as the world's "grandmasters," included just two "Russians," Moscovite Alexander Alekhine, and Latvian Aaron Nimzovich.

CHESS MASTERY BY EDICT

Soviet chess hegemony began as a top-level directive, launched soon after the Communist revolution of 1917 and the consolidation of Bolshevik power in 1921, to spotlight the new Soviet culture. Lenin played chess, partly as a sign of his intellectualism. Even the semi-educated Stalin let it be known that he played. Nikolai Krylenko, a trusted Lenin operative even before World War I who was promoted to Supreme Commander of the Soviet army, as well as Ilyin-Genevsky, Krylenko's fellow Military Revolutionary Committee member in the days right after the fall of the czar, both played chess. (Krylenko was to become one of the most important early promoters of chess in the Soviet Union—until he perished, a victim of Stalin's continuing purges.)

THE IDEAL SOVIET DIVERSION

Chess was cheap; it would occupy and pacify many of the top minds that might otherwise come into conflict with the party thought. Chess supremacy was formally declared an official cultural goal and was achieved through a dictatorially efficient program that, as always, contained the brutal threat of prison or worse for "dissidents." But as we'll see, the "motivation" included carrots as well as sticks, awarding chess masters a very favorable status and salary. And the more successful the player, the more his or her life improved.

The Soviet schools began to offer chess, as they did a number of other activities—such as basketball, soccer, and gymnastics—as an elective, attracting both boys and girls. Only recently have private U.S. nonprofits like New York City's "Chess In Schools" (CIS) program, from its headquarters building at 520 8th Avenue, had similar success. CIS touts a long list of reports and double-blind studies indicating chess is good for our young—improving study habits, reasoning abilities, and boosting confidence and self-reliance—in order to gain entrée to schools. The Soviet lead-

ership used a shortcut. They assumed these benefits and simply decreed chess schoolworthy.

Away-from-school chess centers sprang up as well. Aspiring young chess players could enroll in local clubs for free group lessons. The Soviet Sports Ministry underwrote the salaries for the chess teachers. Paid-for private lessons were technically illegal in the early days after the revolution, since free enterprise was forbidden. Later, in the 1930s and 40s, lessons of all kinds were broadcast over the radio. During the lunch break at work, factory workers might follow radio instructions to do five minutes of gymnastics. Those at home in apartment buildings had access to radio because one master station was piped into speakers in their dwellings, giving them the opportunity to learn gymnastics, music, chess, or other activities that promoted the Soviet slogan “a healthy mind in a healthy body.” On the other hand, golf and tennis were discouraged, seen as pastimes of the bourgeois businessmen of former days.

CHESS PLAYERS IMPROVE THEIR POSITIONS

By the 1960s, chess masters had an enviable life by the standards of the place and time. It’s difficult for an American to understand these Russian basics. Ask Grandmaster Lev Alburt how the housing for the average worker was determined, and he answers, “You lived where you were from.” Property rights were reduced to squatters’ rights in a feudal system grafted onto dialectical materialism. You were born in an apartment in Moscow, for example, and you lived there with other members of your family as they were born or passed away in what we would call a low-level studio apartment. To determine the number of people sharing a space, the formula of eight square meters per person was frequently used. Several families, or one family if it were well connected, might share a one- or two-room space. Visitors used doorbell codes to summon the right family. Even into the 1970s, telephones were still a rarity, just making their way into apartments. On the other hand, rent was nominal, perhaps five rubles per month. Salaries were low, and the basics of life were all one could hope for. In the 1970s, a typical factory worker made about

120 rubles per month, while a factory manager or university professor made in the neighborhood of 300. But these professionals had stringent rules to follow and were subject to strict discipline. Additionally, most lucrative positions required party membership. Being a party member required the payment of dues and the obligation to attend meetings. In itself, it was hardly a passport to power. Rather, it was a necessary inconvenience for those in scrutinized positions. Professional chess players, however, enjoyed an almost unique stature and relative freedom. Even an “ordinary” master with teaching skills could do better than an engineer or physician. Not only were the international-strength players provided coveted private dwellings and paid stipends by the Ministry of Sports, but they also had the rare freedom to travel to foreign competitions, where if they won a cash prize, they were allowed to keep half. (The rest was turned over to the Ministry.) Since the prizes were significant by Soviet standards, they had further motivation to excel. And with travel came other important money-making opportunities. In the 1970s, Lev recalls buying a pair of blue jeans in a Woolworth’s in Cyprus, paying five dollars (his per diem while on a “cultural visit”) and bringing the ubiquitous Western uniform back to the USSR. Although he used them for a gift, they could have been sold for about the monthly wage of a factory worker.

So in the USSR the life of a chess master, especially an internationally competitive one, was enviable, offering a good income, a nicer-than-average home, travel—and comparative freedom not to be under the continual scrutiny of supervisors. A Soviet chess master had the freedom of an artist, with salary and perks greater than the manager of an important factory—without all the headaches and uniquely “red” tape.

THE FIRST SOVIET SUPERMAN —AND HIS PHOSPHORUS

Even while other Soviet goals of the 1920s failed miserably, the plan to dominate world chess got gratifying results. By the early 30s, the system produced its first truly Soviet chess superstar, as opposed to “Imperial” Russian-hold-over masters. His name was

Mikhail Moiseyevich Botvinnik and he won the world chess championship three separate times, a record. He was destined to be the prototype of the chess Soviet superman for the USSR's fifty-year world domination of the sport.

He was born near St. Petersburg in 1911, so his school experiences were totally Soviet. When it came time for him to enroll in college, his Jewish ancestry was no handicap, but his father's profession was. The rules for college admission were simple and strict. If you were the son of a "worker," a laborer at a factory, for example, you had the wide path to college; there were many spots available at the university. On the other hand, if your parents were intelligentsia, perhaps teachers or doctors, the spots available to your societal "class" were strictly and sparingly rationed. Finally, if you were the offspring of bourgeoisie, merchants for example, your chances were negligible. Botvinnik did well on his entrance exams to enroll as an engineering student at Leningrad Polytechnic, and he was already seen as a chess luminary, which gave him prestige. His father, however, was a physician.

A prurient and paradoxical aside—years later, decorated scientist and doctor's-son Botvinnik would adopt a theory of "phosphorus preservation" before important chess encounters. He once explained to co-author Lev Alburt that male players should refrain from sex before a game, because the act robbed the body of phosphorus, an element crucial to brain processes. (Movie fans may be somewhat reminded of a character on the Western side of the cold war from Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb*. Strategic Air Command General Jack D. Ripper, chomping on his cigar and fondling his pearl-handled revolvers, also worried about the need to preserve his "bodily fluids." We should note that Mad Jack seemed to share no other personality traits with the distinguished world chess champion.)

Botvinnik did believe in vigorous exercise of other kinds before a game, however, such as walking briskly for a half-hour. When Alburt, a young and popular bachelor, explained to his great men-

tor that it was difficult to resist women and that walking so far before a game made him sleepy, the Soviet Superman looked at Lev with the pity of the mighty for the weak, the prophet for the proselyte. “Well,” he said ruefully, “then try to refrain as much as you can from losing your phosphorus right before a game. And try to walk at least a few blocks.”

MADISON AVENUE ON THE NEVA

Back to serious Communistic matters. When young Botvinnik was experiencing trouble getting into college due to his father's occupation, Mikhail was fortunate to have the assistance of Jacob Rokhlin. Rokhlin, born in St. Petersburg in 1905, was a young chess master himself, although a bit older than Botvinnik and certainly no future world champion. But he was a grandmaster of the brash, imaginative and compelling style that his American counterparts were contemporaneously using to sell lakes full of Coca-Cola and warehouses full of Lucky Strikes. Rokhlin's “product” was chess. He wanted to sell Botvinnik to the University.

Rokhlin met personally with the chancellor, extolling young Botvinnik's virtues and arguing that he would be a catch for any college, that in future years such an alumnus would be a trophy. The chancellor wanted to admit Botvinnik, but pointed out that he was helpless in this matter. The rules were clear. There were only a few spots for applicants from offspring of the intelligentsia. If Botvinnik were a worker's son, there would be no problem, he said. But he's a doctor's son. (Botvinnik's dad was a dentist, but in the Soviet Union, dentists were also called “doctors”—literally “tooth doctors”—and went to the same medical schools as physicians.) Rokhlin listened, and then expansively explained away the problem as if it were all a byproduct of the chancellor's misunderstanding of the big picture. No problem, Rokhlin said—because Botvinnik's father is really a “doctor-worker.” He ministers only to the workers!

One can picture the chancellor behind his desk, trying to cope with the flimflam of this misplaced, one-man Madison Avenue. Finally, the university official folded, nodding and making a note

in his admissions book: “Botvinnik—doctor-worker.” Botvinnik was admitted and earned both university and later professional honors—for his work with chess and computers.

THE WELL-RED LENIN

Earlier, it was Rokhlin who used his promotional talents to further support chess as a cultural goal. He dreamed up the now famous slogan, recently imported even to the U.S. as a chess promotion, “Chess is the gymnastics of the mind,” in keeping with the Soviet ideal of sound minds in sound bodies. But without billboards, radio commercials or sound bytes, the phrase couldn’t do much good as a mere saying of Rokhlin. So he decided that Lenin said it. After all, Lenin liked chess; it sounded believable. What Lenin said would be quoted in the newspapers at no charge. But Rokhlin knew that the truly important newspapers would need corroboration of such an utterance by the great man. So Rokhlin went to the editor of a small, local newspaper and planted the story. He clipped the article and took it to a meeting with the editor of a regional paper. Then he took that clipping to a meeting with a Pravda reporter. Pravda disclosed that Lenin had stated the great truth. The sentence became legend.

A RISING TIDE RAISES ALL POTEMKINS

During the years following the Bolshevik revolution up to the fall of the Soviet Union, chess remained a point of pride and a high priority. Chess coaches throughout the vast country would continuously develop new pedagogical techniques. Local ministries would conduct seminars, where the most successful trainers were invited to present their ideas. Regional ministries would do likewise. Ultimately, the papers and recommendations would be sent to the Chess Division of the Soviet Ministry of Sports, in our terms a cabinet-level authority. Here the materials would be examined, and the official curriculum would eventually go out to all corners.

Year after year, the lessons were refined, and their results more and more successful. The USSR boasted a million registered tournament players and the longest list of grandmasters from one

country anyone had ever seen. Such success produced more and more expertise and motivation, and thus bred even greater success. (A rising tide raises all Potemkins.) There was no question that the state had reached its goal. In fact, the Soviet chess juggernaut was so overwhelming that a special match was arranged in 1970. It's still known by the official, descriptive name the organizers gave it: USSR versus the Rest of the World. This was no false bravado. The best players from the West scrambled to get on the "Western All Star" side of the tables. Even Bobby Fischer wanted to play so badly that he ceded first board to Denmark's Bent Larsen, whose long record was the best of any non-Soviet, and whose recent victories led some to see him as the great West hope. The Soviets, with a team of five world champions, won with a score of 20.5 to 19.5.

U.S. CONGRESS PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN SMUGGLING OUT THE DOCUMENTS

The curriculum of the Soviet chess course was an important state document, the underpinning of an arduously developed and fantastically successful program. To anyone forced to grow up under the ominous shadow of Stalin's cruel paranoia, the consequences of being caught attempting to spirit these precious course materials out of the country would be terrifying. In 1977 master Roman Pelts, a prominent chess coach, had applied to immigrate to Israel. Doing so had been the only successful path to freedom for some Jewish citizens of the USSR with relatives, real or fictitious, in Israel. This breakthrough program, started during the Nixon administration, was the result of prominent pressure from the U.S. in the form of the Jackson-Vannick amendment that required the Soviets to loosen their emigration rules in exchange for being awarded Most Favored Nation Status.

Characteristically, the Soviet bureaucracy purposely refrained from providing clear guidelines for successful application for such emigration. Simply applying for emigration had severe consequences. The applicant would lose his job immediately and become a cultural pariah. Pelts lost the opportunity to earn a living for his family. If his application were not granted, he would

**THE CURRICULUM OF THE
SOVIET CHESS COURSE WAS
AN IMPORTANT STATE
DOCUMENT.**



join the ranks of the other “refuseniks” who languished in limbo and even in prison.

As it turned out, Pelts’ got permission to leave. As he headed to the West, in his luggage was all he could take from the Soviet Union. Hidden among his clothes and treasured photographs was the condensation of 50 years of Soviet chess training secrets.

Pelts eventually settled in Canada, where he took up residence first in Montreal and then in Toronto. In 1979 he entered the U.S. Open in Chicago. At that tournament was Pelts’ former pupil, Grandmaster Lev Alburt. Alburt had recently defected while playing in a tournament in Germany. Pelts told Lev about the materials the teacher had safely tucked away in Montreal, and the two men began to plan the logical, last step in the journey of the secret documents, their publication in English.

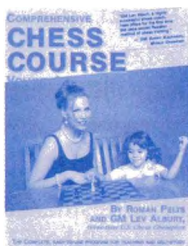
The material became the foundation for the now famous *Comprehensive Chess Course*, whose first volume was published in 1986 and whose seventh and final volume was published in 2000. The Course, now read all over the world, has been translated into languages as unlikely as Thai, and, perhaps just as improbably, has infiltrated nearly all mainstream bookstores, selling more than 100,000 copies to date.

Soviet chess intelligence has come in from the cold to a warm Western welcome.

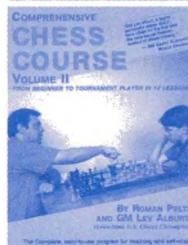
Right: The finalists of the Saint Petersburg tournament, from left to right: Lasker, Alekhine, Capablanca, Marshall and Tarrasch.



The right 7 books that can make you a Chess Champ!

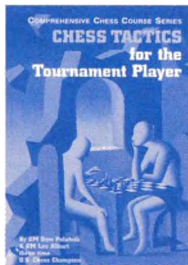


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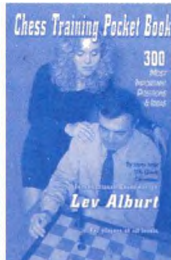


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Co-authored with
Roman Pelts,
Sam Palatnik and
Nicolay Krogius.



Chapter 4

The Ghosts of Chess Heroes Past

All of us chess players received a long-awaited Christmas present in 2001. We've never had one place to gather together the mementoes and artifacts of the world's greatest chess players. The closest we come are the books many of us treasure that tell the stories of our heroes. Stories and images from bygone days when hirsute masters wore stiffly upright, white collars and sat staidly in front of slowly moving pieces—to stories about this generation's greats, wearing anything from T-shirts to business suits, blitzing the pieces at the impatient new time controls.

We've never had one place until now, that is. And it's hard to overstate how important a step the new World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum is. A world's first, it's both FIDE's and USCF's official Hall of Fame and Museum. The U.S. has had a place since the late 1980s, of course. So we may be a bit nonchalant on the topic. And the very fact that the new Hall of Fame is glitzy, with its 45-foot “castle” tower highly visible from the Florida Turnpike in Miami, seems somehow ho-hum American, perhaps. We're surrounded with hyperbole. After all, it's the land



Marina Spassky and Lev Alburt speak with Boris Spassky and Susan Polgar (both obscured behind a specator) at the U.S. "Wall of Fame" at the World Chess Hall of Fame in Miami.

where even the fact that a kitchen knife is sharp merits endless infomercials, since surely its keenness will make all the difference in our lives.

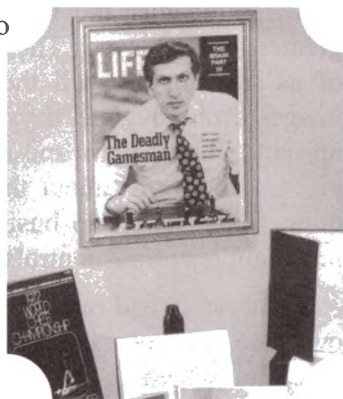
The "Hall of Fame" part of the new Museum's name bespeaks its recognition of the officially designated honorees of both FIDE and USCF. FIDE has begun in 2001 with

five—Morphy, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Fischer. The USCF, which has been doing this for some time, inducted its 31st in December 2001.

The "Museum" in its name refers to its collection of artifacts and other memorabilia. Such treasures don't necessarily have to pertain to a Hall of Famer. Obviously, there are many important players who may never make it to that particular summit, but who were interesting, influential and important nevertheless.

COVER STORIES

Several of the displays contain mainstream U.S. magazine covers that feature chess personalities. In Bobby Fischer's display, for example, is the famous *Life Magazine* cover from November 12, 1971. If



Perhaps the most well-known mainstream magazine cover dedicated to a chess personality is this 1971, pre-world-championship shot of Bobby You-Know-Who.

The cover is featured in one of his Hall-of-Fame displays.

you invested the fifty-cent price 30 years ago, we hope you tucked this treasure away in a safe place.

But go back even ten years earlier. Do you remember who the heart-throb of U.S. chess used to be between the time we were all humming along with “Itsy-Bitsy, Teenie-Weenie Yellow Polka-dot Bikini” and the post-Cuban-missile-crisis phase of digging nuclear bomb shelters in our backyards? The August 7, 1961, issue of *Sports Illustrated* gave us a moody shot of many-time U.S. Women’s Champ Lisa Lane on its cover.



America's chess sweetheart? Yes, it happened, as this 1961 Sports Illustrated cover in the Hall of Fame documents. Millions handed over their quarters to see more shots of Lisa Lane inside.

Skip back yet another thirty years plus. Who do you think shows up on the December 7, 1925, cover of *Time Magazine*—then in black and white, of course? A handsome chess world champion named José Raúl Capablanca.



The 1925 Time Magazine cover of José Raúl Capablanca

Fifteen cents would have gotten you, or your grandfather, this piece of history. Now you can come see it in the Hall's Capa display.

CHESS SETS FIT FOR A KING

In one corner of the 11,000-square-foot Museum, in a castle alcove, are dozens of sets donated by Floyd Sarisohn of Chess Collector's International. In a display that's been very appealing to the general public, a wide range of costly collector's sets peek out from behind locked glass cases.



The figures of this hand-painted set portray the officers and men of a Roman legion.

On the collection's other extreme, this "American Gothic" set features rooks in the shape of outhouses.



ELO'S SHOULDERS

Besides the cover stories of chess, the World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum tells some of the great, behind-the-scenes chess dramas and secrets—and occasionally even helps right an historical injustice. For example, take the issue of ratings. Nothing is dearer to a chess player's heart than his rating. (Well, of course everyone knows he's under-rated, but his rating, its ups and downs, however miniscule, are his ego's stock-market report.) Tournament chess simply wouldn't be imaginable without ratings.

Many know that Professor Arpad Elo was instrumental in initiating the first accurate rating system, one in essence still used by USCF and FIDE. In fact, FIDE's ratings are called the ELO system. Players around the world ask "What's your ELO?" ("ELO" always seems to be in all caps, leading many ignorant of its derivation to assume it's some kind of acronym.)

Indeed, Arpad Elo made a great contribution to our system. He's honored in our Hall of Fame. But his role was primarily that of a statistical fine-tuner. He stood squarely on the shoulders of another man who worked painstaking years to develop a reliable rating formula. His name was Kenneth Harkness, and his image adorns a silver plaque in the Hall of Fame as well. And a treasure more

interesting is the original, oversized notebook he used to rate both historic and contemporaneous tournaments, testing his theories in his own hand. The book is both a monument to his labor and an insight into his genius.

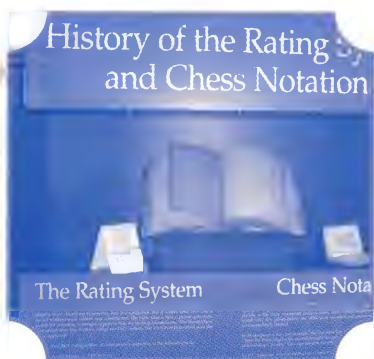
PUT YOURSELF ON THE GUEST LIST!

The World Chess Hall of Fame's Grand Opening took place a week before Christmas, on Sunday, December 16 and Monday, December 17, 2001. The list of guests read like Jeremy Gage's *Chess Personalia*.

Chess leaders from all over the world were there. World Chess Federation Honorary President Florencio Campomanes, executive director Emmanuel Omuko and treasurer David Jarrett saw their museum for the first time, and saw the first five inductees—Morphy, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Fischer—enshrined.

Then USCF President John McCrary gaveled in the latest U.S. Chess Hall of Famer, GM Lubosh Kavalek. McCrary is a professional psychologist and a serious chess historian and collector. Frank Camaratta, at the time USCF's Vice President of Finance and owner of The House of Staunton, attended. McCrary and Camaratta have been among the two best friends the Museum has had in its start-up days. Of course, Shane Samole, President of Excalibur Electronics, and his father Sidney before him, are the ones who had the vision and put up the wherewithal to construct the Hall's landmark building.

Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Panelas declared May 16th "World Chess Museum Day." Costumed members of the Florida Renaissance Historical Society—a group well known for their "live chess" performances—put on a show replaying the famous Morphy Opera-box game. During their well rehearsed versions,



Harkness' workbook, containing hundreds of pages of hypothetical ratings.



The Florida Renaissance Historical Society during a pre-game performance at the World Chess Hall of Fame.

which take place on a 1,600-square-foot board, piece-confrontations are done with a dramatic flurry of sword-fighting. The captured are carried off on stretchers. After the stage-crafted carnage, Hall of Famers and other

international chess stars took on all comers in a simultaneous.

Before the Museum's opening, sadly, two chess greats passed away. Your co-authors knew them both and will miss them. We're thankful that the new Hall of Fame and Museum gives us a place to mark their contributions for hundreds of years to come, so that future generations will get to know them as well.

JACK COLLINS, CHESS TEACHER OF THE CENTURY

At 5:30 a.m. December 3, 2001, Jack Collins died. He's a USCF Hall of Famer. The text in the Hall's display reads as follows:

John ("Jack") Collins

John Collins is justly famous as the most influential chess teacher in U.S. history. He taught many great U.S. players, including Bobby Fischer, Robert Byrne and William Lombardy—all Hall of Famers honored in this Museum. The U.S. Chess Federation officially proclaimed Collins "Chess Teacher of the Century."

Collins is one of the few players who excelled nationally at both through-the-mail and over-the-board play, winning the U.S. correspondence championship and ranking as one of the top OTB players in the U.S.

A prolific author, he taught tens of thousands to play through his books.

Collins is particularly inspiring to young players. His legions of "Collins' Kids" show up in important events such as the U.S. Amateur Team East, where his contributions are honored annually.

The chess sets shown at bottom were his childhood sets.

The book at left, bottom, was given to him by his father. The clock on the ledge is a special one (it sounds a tone every five seconds) that Collins used to train young Bobby Fischer.



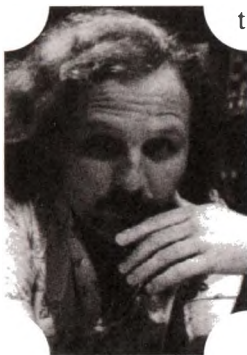
A young Jack Collins

TONY MILES, BRITISH CHESS PIONEER

Fellow *ChessCafe* columnist Tony Miles recently passed away at the all-too-early age of 46. Some thirty years ago, Miles was one of the hottest prospects in chess. It's not stretching a comparison to say that Miles was to British chess what George Harrison, who died on November 30, was to British rock as a Beatle. Before Miles, British chess was hardly a factor on the world scene. Its glory days—when Staunton, Blackburn and even Steinitz walked the shores of the Thames—were a hundred years spent. Then Miles won the world junior championship and became the first modern British GM, beginning a British chess explosion that brought



Above: Jack & Ethel Collins received countless awards. The Hall of Fame houses a treasure trove of Collins' artifacts.



Anthony Miles

the island to arguably the world's number two spot—if one goes by ratings of top players—after the Soviet Union. Even the more recent British GMs owe a huge debt to Miles, who constructed the ladder rung-by-rung as he climbed it and which they all later clambered up to earn their titles.

Both co-authors Alburt and Lawrence knew Miles. Alburt first met him at an international tournament in Dubna, near Moscow, in the early 1970s, before Miles became a GM. Inspired by Bobby Fischer, Miles would then drink only milk and kept to himself—although he was quite pleasant to everyone. (In fact, Miles was always a sportsman.) Miles was a handsome teenager then, and Alburt remembers that Tony was a bit shocking with his very long, curly blond hair. Although such locks were not uncommon in the West in the 70s, the look was unusual behind the old Iron Curtain. Miles was a little eccentric, even then, but clearly a big talent. In fact, Alburt feels that with a little bit of luck, better organization and more dedication, Miles would have gone as far as Nigel Short or Jon Spielman, both world championship candidates.

Tony, a creative genius, would frankly get bored at the hum-drum moments when the most consistent professionals are able to focus on the mundane need to chalk up points. Certainly, Miles was at his best when challenged by circumstances. Once he was forced by a back problem to play while lying flat in a gurney. He did quite well. In fact, some of his opponents later said that his supine approach must have been an advantage, disconcerting his adversaries. Perhaps herein lies new teeth to the old chess saw that no healthy chess player has ever lost a game. It's likely that no healthy chess player without an outrageous alibi has ever lost to a confined-to-bed opponent. (Well, the rule-proving exception readily springs to mind, when a gracious and appreciative Andersen played Morphy in his sickbed. But that was in the days when men were men and pawns were nothing.) In reality, playing

**MILES COULD HAVE GONE
AS FAR AS NIGEL SHORT OR
JON SPIELMAN, BOTH
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
CANDIDATES.**



while lying in a rolling hospital bed should be no one's idea of an edge.

Lawrence first met Miles when the Brit changed his national affiliation to qualify, legitimately under the rules then valid, for the U.S. Championship in 1988 and 1989. Some other players vying for the championship were a bit apprehensive—Tony was the vanquisher of Karpov, by means of that famous 1. ... a6 London game. The others felt that Tony was in “their” championship only because of a loophole, that he really didn't reside in the U.S. Indeed, later the rules for U.S. Championship qualification were significantly toughened. Lawrence was USCF's executive director when Miles played in the 1989 Long Beach championship and remembers one evening in particular. It was the evening of the awards ceremony.

Tony had not vanquished the others. In fact it was an unheralded 20-year-old Stuart Rachels, bottom-rated and seeded into the championship only because he had won the U.S. Junior, who took the crown, tying with Roman Dzindzichashvili and Yasser Seirawan. (Rachels is the only lowest-rated U.S. championship competitor ever to win the title.) At the time, Miles still wore his hair long and sported a moustache and close-cropped beard, looking much more like a stage-handsome Shakespearean actor than a chess player. Tony was neither rueful nor ungracious, politely participating in the dinner and awards. He was affable, low-key, witty and open.

A member of the organizing team at one extended moment heaped verbal abuse, laced with very non-Shakespearean oaths, on Tony while he was dining in the hotel restaurant. Lawrence, at Tony's table, feared that the scene would turn into a public

screaming match, perhaps within ear-shot of media. But Miles, bearing the expression of one looking down from a great height on a confused centipede, remained calm and soft-spoken. In fact, he then took part in the ceremony as if nothing untoward had happened. Lawrence found Tony extremely likable. Both your co-authors will miss you, Tony. May you find peace and beat world champions from every era with your patented 1. ... a6.

They'll be at the World Chess Hall of Fame
in Miami on March 1 & 2...

Boris Spassky

Alexandra Kosteniuk

Susan Polgar

Lev Alburt

Bruce Pandolfini

Walter Browne

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Poster advertising the 2002 World Chess Hall of Fame Induction. (See Chapters 7 and 8.)

Chapter 5

Schachgötterdämmerung to Electroshock

World Championship History, Part I

Did the invention of the electric fan enable Wilhelm Steinitz to concentrate despite the summer heat in his stuffy New York City walkup—and so play an integral part in our present day knowledge of the bishop pair? Was the development of the thermos bottle the secret, caffeinated explanation of the playing stamina Emanuel Lasker exhibited even at an advanced age? In a word or two, probably not. But if we require a reminder that gadgetry can become the focus of big events, we need only consider Florida’s “vote-a-matic” or even Linda Tripp’s tape recorder.

A conversation in 1990 between Lev Alburt and then world champion Garry Kasparov centered around Garry’s contention that the world champions were products, even distillations, of their times. Not really a revolutionary or even an anti-intuitive proposition, but an interesting one to flesh out a bit. It calls for a wide-angle, interdisciplinary view of the chess champions not normally taken. Because Garry made the initial argument, let’s start with his recent reign and then go back to the first champs to

see what this special focus can bring out for us.

KASPAROV VERSUS KARPOV, THE TWILIGHT OF THE CHESS GODS

Whatever year we're living in, the old days were always better. In the 1980s, some jaded achessionados complained that the Kasparov-Karpov matches had become boring. The "public," they argued, grew weary of these same old, sound-alike Russians and their seething, arduous matches.

But our 21st-Century view has been refocused by recent championship overpopulation. Since just 1999, four new names—Alex Khalifman, Vishy Anand, Ruslan Ponomarev and Vladimir Kramnik—have been penciled in the once venerable list, whereas the first three world champions—Steinitz, Lasker, and Capablanca—held down the throne for a total of more than 60 years! In comparison to quick-play elimination-tournaments among 100 world-championship "candidates" (who have sometimes found it easier to give winning checks than to cash those issued by FIDE), the K-K cycle in five acts was pure Wagnerian *Schachgötterdämmerung*, the Twilight of the Chess Gods.

In a *mas macho* metaphor, the three prizefights of heavyweight champs Muhammed Ali and Joe Frazier pack a punch. Without those fights, neither boxer's legend would have been chiseled in as large a script. In the days of 15-round, sock-'til-you-drop combat, each brought out the superman in the other. Broken jaws and cracked ribs were ignored in the quest for victory. The insiders as well as the boxing public were split in two. There was the Ali camp and there was the Frazier crowd. You were in one corner or the other. What's more, The Greatest and Smokin' Joe detested each other with the very same intensity as did the Russian K's. And, in both the case of the chessboard pugilists and the in-the-ring tacticians, the years away from the blood-sport have not brought détente.

At any rate, the great "heavyweight" bouts of both combative sports now seem only a flickering newsreel of yesteryear, from the legendary eras of Wilhelm Steinitz and José Capablanca and

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their respective sweet-science contemporaries, Gentleman Jim Corbett and Jack Dempsey.

The target of Kasparov’s argument was of course his arch-nemesis, Anatoly Karpov—with whom he played matches in 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, and 1990, yielding a final total plus score of a mere two points to Garry. Karpov was world champion from the time of Bobby Fischer’s no-show forfeiture in 1975 until the controversial first two K-K matches, originally intended to be a single contest. Karpov, Garry pointed out to Lev, developed and reigned during those years of decaying Soviet morale and morals symbolized by the sometimes brutal, sometimes buffoonish Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary and then President of the Presidium from 1964 to his death in 1982. (Brezhnev could both faint under a withering dressing down during a Central Committee argument and suggest poisoning his predecessor, Nikita Khrushchev.) Unsurprisingly, in the years of his supremacy, it was generally accepted that the apparatchik would say anything about anyone to get or maintain an enviable position. Corruption, cronyism and dreadful mediocrity were the hallmarks of these Soviet years. Karpov, a prominent Communist party member, Kasparov’s thesis went, flourished in this hot house of bureaucratic treachery.

Kasparov further supported the thesis by pointing out his own relation to his times. In 1985, the year Kasparov captured the chess crown, Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary.

Perestroika (political and economic rebuilding), *glasnost* (forthright public information) and the fall of the Wall were the invigorating sequence leading to an anti-communist revolution from within. In 1990, the world gawked at the paradoxical spectacle of the Soviet leader receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. This, argued Garry, was the milieu he both reflected and embodied. Despite the obviously self-serving advantages provided by his adopting such a view, Kasparov had a point.

It's tempting (and we are so easily tempted) to expand Garry's idea by holding the prism of such "socio-political" interpretation over the scoresheets of the super-Ks. One might argue that Karpov's safe, positional, flexible play and Kasparov's bold and optimistic approach were at least partially products of their times as well.

IN THE BEGINNING

Now let's go back to the advent of the modern chess championship, looking briefly in order at the men and their times, and how we can relate the two. Our bios are brief and basic. They don't go beyond the depth of field of our focus on contemporaneous influences and connections. Depending on your agreement or dispute with our speculations, you will find our brief sampling of each man's life and times either well selected or capricious. If you haven't already read about these fascinating legends and want to know more, see the book list at the end of this chapter for suggestions. Along the way, it's a chance to share some playful pur-



**WHAT VALUE IS IT TO
KNOW THAT HUNGARIAN
GEORG BIRO INVENTED
THE FIRST PRACTICAL BALLPOINT
PEN DURING THE SECOND REIGN
OF ALEXANDER ALEKHINE?**

Modern Chess World Champions

Champion	Years as Champion	Country of Residence
Wilhelm Steinitz (1836-1900)	1886-1894	Austria, England, US
Emanuel Lasker (1868-1941)	1894-1921	Germany, US
José Raúl Capablanca (1888-1942)	1921-1927	Cuba, US
Alexander Alekhine (1892-1946)	1927-1935; 1937-1946	Russia, France
Max Euwe (1901-1981)	1935-1937	Netherlands
Mikhail Botvinnik (1911-1995)	1948-1957; 1958-1960; 1961-1963	Soviet Union
Vassily Smyslov (1921-)	1957-1958	Soviet Union
Mikhail Tal (1936-1993)	1960-61	Soviet Union
Tigran Petrosian (1924-1984)	1963-1969	Soviet Union
Boris Spassky (1937-)	1969-1972	Soviet Union, France
Bobby Fischer (1943-)	1972-1975	US
Anatoly Karpov (1951-)	1975-1985 (FIDE: 1993-1999)	Soviet Union/Russia
Garry Kasparov (1963-)	1985-1993 (GMA, PCA, WCC: 1993-2001)	Soviet Union/Russia
Alex Khalifman (1966-)	1999-2000 (FIDE)	Russia
Vladimir Kramnik (1975-)	2001- (Braingames)	Russia
Vishi Anand (1969-)	2001-2002 (FIDE)	India
Ruslan Ponomarev (1983-)	2002- (FIDE)	Ukraine

suit of trivia. What value is it to know that Hungarian Georg Biro invented the first practical ballpoint pen during the second reign of Alexander Alekhine? Next to none. But who can resist such *non sequiturs*? Certainly not us. (As young men, both your co-authors have done their time in an academic environment, so we're professionally trained to find a way to use all of our research, relevant or not.) We've put together a program of the principals for easy reference. It gives the champions' years of birth and death, their years on top, and the countries they spent most of their time in.

WILHELM STEINITZ— FIRST CHAMPION WITH FANS?

It's been said that Wilhelm Steinitz invented the world championship. He was born in 1836 in Prague, about the time that Englishman Michael Faraday was doing his revolutionary work in electromagnetic induction. Steinitz' contemporary, Russian Dmitry Mendeleyev, formulated the table of elements with such accuracy and logic that he was able to predict the existence of then unknown elements simply by the blank spots in his chart. Indeed, it was a time when modern science was getting serious.

Steinitz was recognized, unofficially, as champion since 1866. At 49, seven years after Edison turned night into day with his electric bulb, Steinitz sat down to win what he himself termed the first official world championship match. It was a traveling contest, against the top-contender—Polish-born Johannes Hermann Zukertort—, moving from New York, to St. Louis, and finally to New Orleans in 1886. This was the same year that saw the last in-the-ring appearance of bare-knuckle great John L. Sullivan, the Chicago Haymarket Riot between strikers and police, the surrender of Geronimo, and the dedication of the Statue of Liberty.

After a chess-filled lifetime that included an astonishing 28 years as champ, Steinitz died in 1900, the year German Max Planck's theories—asserting that matter emits or absorbs energy only in small, discrete units called quanta—led to quantum theory, still a hot scientific topic today. Steinitz spent his whole life in

an age that was amazed and enchanted by its science. Older, simpler beliefs were being challenged by scientists such as Britain's Charles Darwin, who in 1859 published *On the Origin of the Species*, the groundbreaking work leading to the modern understanding of evolution. (Darwin made his key observations while on the *HMS Beagle* in the Galapagos Islands, in the news at the time of this writing, more than 140 years later, as the natural victim of the latest oil-tanker spill.)



Wilhelm Steinitz

“Positivism” was a dominant philosophical school of thought in Steinitz’ day. It held that philosophy should be founded only on empirical knowledge and experience. Steinitz lived in England when the British spokesman for this position, John Stuart Mill, was writing and lecturing.

So, amazing as it is outside of this context, it is really not surprising that Steinitz began the formulation of the scientific principles of chess play. He was very aware of the importance of what he was doing. Sometime around the early 1870s, it was as if he donned a laboratory jacket and sat down at his chess set with a microscope.

His games in Vienna in 1873 contrast markedly with his previous play, notably wild games against Adolf Anderssen in 1866. He converted himself from the swashbuckling style of his contemporaries and his own youth (he was once known as “the Austrian Morphy”) to a methodical application of the principles of sound chess. Steinitz examined the popular openings of the day for White and found logical defenses. He gave up the unjustified kingside attacks in favor of accumulating small, objective advantages until an invasion was justified in succeeding. Steinitz often focused in his writings on the static, or positional elements, such as pawn structure. Indeed, although we may think of Aaron Nimzovich as the progenitor of such “modern” ideas, it was



AFTER LOSING THE RETURN MATCH IN MOSCOW IN 1896, STEINITZ BECAME UNHINGED ...

Steinitz who invented the term “holes” to indicate vulnerably weak points in pawn structure. Among other key ideas, he worked out the methods of using both the queenside majority and the bishop-pair to advantage. Steinitz invented chess theory as scientific method.

In 1888, Steinitz became a naturalized U.S. citizen. In 1894, he was finally defeated, by 25-year-old Emanuel Lasker who had studied his elder’s precepts and added his own ideas. Steinitz was 57. After losing the return match in Moscow in 1896, Steinitz became unhinged, spending time in a mental asylum abroad. Even after his return to the U.S., he remained markedly eccentric, claiming he could move the pieces without touching them—by projecting electro-magnetism from his fingers. He claimed to speak with God on the telephone—another contemporaneous invention (1876)—and even to give Him pawn and move at chess. It’s not hard to connect these fantasies directly to important elements of Steinitz’ milieu—to the experiments of Faraday and to the scientific discoveries and theories that seemed to downplay the need, at least in a mechanical way, of an all-powerful deity. Steinitz died penniless in the mental sanitarium on New York City’s Ward Island. During Steinitz’ supremacy, the arts found new ways to express man’s changing relationship with his universe. Claude Monet began the Impressionistic celebration of the world—painted in its midst *en plein air*, rather than in the confines of a stuffy studio—with the eponymous canvas *Impression: Sunrise* (1872).

Two decades later, the eerie, disturbing paintings of the late 1890s by the troubled Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, who shot himself after leaving the asylum in St. Remy, France, expressed

much of the contemporaneous conflicts. His *The Starry Night* depicted the fast-asleep, otherwise peaceful mountain-valley village of St. Remy, centered meaningfully around a church spire, lying exposed beneath an explosive sky full of swirling supernovae. The pessimistic philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer and the novels of Thomas Hardy reflected the scientific rebellion of the 19th Century and the resulting feeling of human displacement in an “unconscious,” deterministic universe. Richard Wagner (1813-1883), whose operas seem long enough for even a pre-quick-play world championship match, was the dominant composer of the era. In one sense, Wagner’s systematic expansion of both the orchestra and the music it played was akin to Steinitz’ own lifelong devotion to the development of chess ideas.

STEINITZIAN SYNCHRONICITY

In 1866, the beginning of Steinitz’ unofficial reign, Alfred Nobel (whose bequest established the Nobel Prizes) invented dynamite, while Prussia and Italy defeated Austria in the Seven Weeks’ War.

In 1867, antiseptic surgery was established. Custer made his last stand in 1876, and the gunfight at the OK Corral made news, and widows, in 1881. In 1882 the electric fan was invented, and Gentleman James J. Corbett and John L. Sullivan fought the first heavyweight championship match, in New Orleans, under new rules requiring boxing gloves. Defense and technique won in the ring as well. “Gentleman Jim” knocked out the “Boston Strongboy” in 21 rounds. The boxing champ faired better financially—the purse was \$25,000 and there was a \$10,000 side bet. Steinitz won only \$2,000 for his convincing KO of “Sugar Cake” Zukertort. Thankfully, aspirin was invented in 1888. In 1891, basketball was developed at the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The first match against Lasker took place in 1894, the year the Sino-Japanese War began, the year Dreyfus was convicted falsely of treason in Paris, the year Eugene V. Debs called the first general strike of rail workers, and the year that Thomas Alva Edison

introduced his kinescope, precursor of the moving picture. The second Lasker match in 1896 took place the year Frenchman Becquerel discovered radioactivity, William Jennings Bryan delivered his famous “Cross of Gold” speech at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s Plessy versus Ferguson decision granted states the right to provide “separate but equal” facilities for education, transportation, and public accommodations, a policy not overturned until 1954, in Brown versus the Board of Education. 1896 was also the year that fudge was invented and that Athens hosted the first modern Olympic games.

During Steinitz’ long championship dominance, nine U.S. presidents, from Andrew Johnson to Grover Cleveland, carried their belongings in and out of the White House (without the recent moving-out brouhaha).

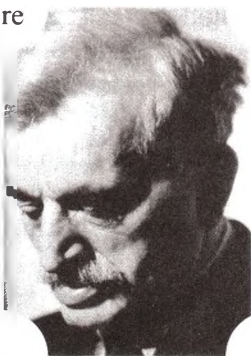
EMANUEL LASKER—CHESS FROM THE ANALYST’S COUCH

Emanuel Lasker himself may likely have agreed with Kasparov’s thesis. Lasker defined top-level chess as a contest “between creative minds representative of their period.”

He was certainly as much a man of his times as Steinitz. And it seems easy to make the case that three minds very influential on his own were countryman G.W.F. Hegel, contemporary Sigmund Freud and personal friend Albert Einstein. (Lasker and Einstein liked to talk together. Normally, it is said, Einstein wanted to talk to Lasker about chess, while Lasker wanted to talk to Einstein about mathematics. Both men had the common sense to find their companion’s best topic.)

Lasker was a German national born late in 1868, two years after the start of Steinitz’ unofficial reign. The story goes, told by his friend and distant relative Edward Lasker, that a young Emanuel Lasker was about to give up chess when one of his tournament opponent’s pawns fell unnoticed from the board at adjournment. Lasker won the game, made the master title, stayed in chess, and won the world championship five years later. Tough to top that

press release, especially in the days before 20th-Century publicists invented Hollywood. But his life did not have a feel-good-movie ending. Emanuel Lasker was multi-talented and highly educated. A year after winning the rematch with Steinitz, he enrolled at the University of Heidelberg and later at the University of Erlangen, where he earned his Ph.D. in mathematics. Lasker was thus exposed to the latest scientific and philosophical ideas of his day. Indeed, he never intended to rely on chess as a profession. Only economic necessity forced this on him. He wrote books and papers on philosophy and mathematics, the latter a field in which a few of his contributions remain useful to this day.



Emanuel Lasker

One of the University of Heidelberg's most famous professors of philosophy in an era before Lasker's matriculation was G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), whose words must still have echoed in the corridors of the revered school on the River Neckar. Hegel wrote and lectured that any idea or thesis is incomplete until it struggles with its antithesis to produce a third element, synthesis, which reconciles the truths of both its predecessors. Lasker himself wrote:

"On the chessboard lies and hypocrisy do not survive long. The creative combination lays bare the presumption of a lie; the merciless fact, culminating in a checkmate, contradicts the hypocrite." In 1907, Lasker published a book entitled *Kampf* (*Struggle*), an ironic title given the misery later caused Lasker and millions of others by Adolf Hitler, author of an infamous book with a similar title, *Mein Kampf*.

In psychology, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was busy showing that the human brain operated on both an associative and unconscious basis, revealing that we often don't know what our true motivations are—and that we're products of a constant inner

struggle. Freud's revelations were explosive. In art his theories took the form of the agonized screamers of Edvard Munch (1863-1944), expressing the torment of demons within. The Cubist paintings (i.e., *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Picasso, 1907) dissected the world to show all its angles at once, in a jigsaw puzzle of perspectives that seems to reflect our own jumbled perceptions and thoughts. In music, Austrian/American Arnold Schoenberg (*Pierrot Lunaire*, 1912) and Russian/French/American Igor Stravinsky (*The Rite of Spring*, 1913) used atonal dissonance to reflect inner conflict.

German Alban Berg, one of the most important modern opera composers, combined atonal music with blatant post-Freudian themes. In still-silent film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* acted out the human struggle between tyranny and chaos. In literature, Oscar Wilde penned *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)—in which the results of the protagonist's sins were objectified on a special canvas. Bram Stoker gave the world the unforgettable allegorical battle between the best and worst inside the human, *Dracula* (1897). In 1901 Joseph Conrad published *Heart of Darkness*, exposing an even more frightening inner struggle with human "horror."

Meanwhile in the sciences, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, showing that it is as correct to say that the house moved by the car as it is to say that the car moved past the house, strained the normal view of objective measurement. It argued that proper assessment is possible only in relation to more than one object. His theories showed the relationship of the physical constant, the speed of light, with mass and energy, and explained the minute but pestering differences between Newtonian calculations and the observable fact.

Richard R ti himself played psychoanalyst when he thought he had found the motives for Lasker's style. R ti accused Lasker of making bad moves on purpose. In reality, Dr. Lasker chose his plans with a dedication to struggle, and with psychological insight and a faith that the value of a move is relative to the com-

plete context. A good move against one opponent may be a bad move against another. Other things being nearly equal, he preferred the move that led to a struggle on psychological turf uncomfortable for his opponent.

Lasker's off-the-board life was certainly a struggle as well. His victory at St. Petersburg 1914 resulted in Czar Nicholas II's honoring him—along with runners-up Capablanca, Alekhine, Tarrasch, and Marshall—as one of the original “grandmasters.” This was the same Nicholas who was married to Alexandra and was involved with faith healer Grigory Rasputin because of the starets' effective treatment of the czarevich's hemophilia. Actually, Alexandra was Czarina's adopted name. The German princess' real name was (mega-trivia alert!) Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt. But soon after the St. Petersburg tournament, the carnage of World War I cut a bloody swath across everyone's plans. The punishing Treaty of Versailles that ended the war in 1919 assigned to Germany crushing financial reparations and the post-war economy of the Weimar Republic collapsed under the debt. Hyperinflation followed, during which it was actually possible to see people pushing wheelbarrows full of nearly worthless paper currency to the grocers.

Lasker agreed to play a world championship match with Jose Capablanca, to whom he had technically “resigned the title” in a 1920 letter—in an ironic way trying to handpick his successor. But the chess world was willing to pay for a match. In fact, it was willing to pay \$25,000, with Lasker taking half regardless of the outcome. Lasker and Capablanca played in Havana. Lasker wasn't used to the hot Cuban climate (he could have used that electric

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fan!) and, in the process of losing badly, he had to plead illness after completing less than half the match.

Although we all sympathetically wish he'd had an easier life, it's impossible for a chess lover to regret Lasker's return, forced or otherwise. Talk about relativity and struggle—take a look at Emanuel Lasker versus distant family member Edward Lasker (New York 1924). In this tournament, Emanuel took first ahead of Capa and Alekhine. The old champ created new endgame theory over the board, drawing with a lone knight against his opponent's rook and pawn! (The general idea was known, but Lasker created a specifically new position.)

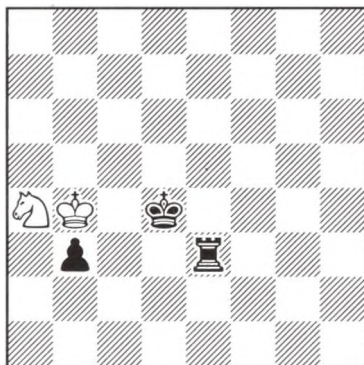


Diagram 13

Black can't make progress because his king can't get close to his pawn:

97. Nb2 Ke4 98. Na4 Kf3 99. Ka3 Ke4 100. Kb4 Kd4 101. Nb2 Rh3 102. Na4 Kd3 103. Kxb3 Kd4+, draw.

After a number of financially rewarding results, Lasker retired from chess again. But once more, the worst of human events overtook him, as the family property was confiscated in 1933 and the old champion and his wife fled Nazi Germany. Once again, he had to play to earn a living. He did very well. For example, at Moscow 1935, he placed third, without losing a game, only a half point behind the modern super-class of Mikhail Botvinnik and Salo Flohr—an amazing feat for someone who won the world

championship way back in 1894. (The older the player, the greater the odds his idol is Lasker!)

In 1937, he moved to New York City, where he taught chess and bridge, and wrote his last book, *On the Community of the Future*. He was still looking ahead. He died in the charity ward of New York City's Mt. Sinai Hospital in early 1941 while his sister was perishing in a Nazi concentration camp. We should note that Lasker's last years were full, active and, despite financial hardship, tolerably happy. Martha, his devoted wife of 30 years, was unfailingly at his side and was with him at the hospital at his death.

EMANUEL'S MILIEU

Jack Johnson and Jack Dempsey were the notable boxing champs during Lasker's supremacy. The Eiffel tower poked a hole in the ceiling of European architecture in 1889. Inventors were busy with the airplane, flown by the Wrights in 1903; the thermos bottle, invented in 1904; and plastic in the form of Bakelite in 1909. The affordable automobile arrived in the form of the Model T in 1909. The Geiger counter and the zipper were patented in 1913 (although the latter innovation took a while to catch on), and the first traffic light blinked drivers to a stop in 1914, also the year air conditioning was invented. The depth bomb made a big splash in 1916, the same year stainless steel was invented. D.W. Griffith's silent masterpiece, *Intolerance*, filled the theatres. The Bolshevik Revolution turned the old aristocracy of Russia on its collective head in 1917, the same year that the electric razor first buzzed across cheeks. The arc welder was patented two years later. Lasker as champ saw McKinley, Taft, Wilson, and Warren Gamaliel (we couldn't resist the middle name, since trivia is at stake) Harding pass through the revolving door of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NorthWest.

JOSÉ RAÚL CAPABLANCA

—UNFLAPPABLE IN THE ERA OF FLAPPERS

Like the times he thrived in, our section on José Capablanca provides a respite from both the seriousness and deprivation of

the first two world champs. A distillation of his milieu? This part of our argument seems a mate-in-one. Capa was a major idol of the era, the Roaring Twenties—a decade of good times, short skirts, silent movies, easy money, boot-leg hooch, hot music and frenetic dances like the Charleston and the Black Bottom. Jazz and its legendary coronet-spokesperson Louis Armstrong, along with Duke Ellington, Kay Kyser, Jelly Roll Morton and his “Red Hot Peppers,” stirred the creative juices and the illegal martinis of millions.

Capa was New World, born in Havana in 1888, the quickest of studies and a man who liked a good time and easy living. Most everyone knows the story of his learning chess by watching his father, a military officer, and a friend play, then horning in to beat his dad.

Capablanca’s rise is a study in ease. He became champion of Cuba while still a youngster. As a very young man, he surprised the chess world by beating American champ Frank Marshall in a match. Then Capa won his first international event, a strong one that included the world’s best except for Lasker. In this tournament, San Sebastian, Spain, 1911, some of the famous masters expressed their disgust that so unproven a player as Capablanca was allowed to play. (In fact, the requirements of having won prizes in two previous international tournaments had been waived for the young Cuban at the insistence of the vanquished, impressed and gallant Marshall.) The player who objected the most vigorously was Ossip Bernstein. Capa not only beat Bernstein in their individual encounter, but the game won the brilliancy prize.

In 1913, Capa was given a job in the Cuban diplomatic core. His job description appeared to call for his touring the world playing chess. He had no other duties and the guaranteed income made life easy. The appointment also gave him an additional excuse to attend balls and wear a tuxedo. In the following years, he enjoyed continued success. Then, in 1921, he won the title from Lasker in the steamy Havana match.

Capa certainly cultivated the Easy Life—in fact, sometimes he must have seemed like a character stepping from the pages of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Once at a tournament in England, his adjournment session was interrupting a tennis date. Capa appeared in tennis whites, racquet tucked under one arm! Somehow, Capa seemed able to play nearly flawless chess apparently without serious work. He was the “chess machine.” He lost only one game in 10 years. In fact, he had lost none from 1916 to New York



J.R. Capablanca

1924, when Richard Reti made worldwide headlines by beating him. When his losing a single game was the biggest of news, how could he help but become a bit prideful? He often played serious tournament games as if they were mere simuls, coming to the table when it was his move only to look over the situation briefly, not bothering to sit down. In a few moments, he'd make a move and then strut off again to a conversation.

Until his unexpected loss to Alexander Alekhine in 1927, we can understand why some of Capa's hardworking and struggling contemporaries found him nearly insufferable. The handsome champion spoke of chess being “played out,” implying that it was just too easy. He suggested adding pieces to make it interesting again. Even on the rare occasions when he lost a game, Capa must have seemed intolerably arrogant to the mere mortals of the game. He would say that it was good that he lost occasionally, to dispel the illusion that he was unbeatable!

If we were arranging things to fit our theories perfectly, we would have had his defeat take place in 1929, of course, the year the Easy Life ended, with the worldwide stock-market crash. But you have to admit, the real facts come pretty close.

Even Capablanca's life worsened. Top-flight chess was becoming too complicated for someone who didn't study, no matter how gifted. After his loss to Alekhine, his marriage became difficult.

His health suffered. Finally, following his divorce in 1937, his influential in-laws got revenge by having him demoted to a Cuban foreign office position that actually required a bit of work. But the Cuban could still make headlines. In 1938, when he married the stunningly beautiful Russian princess Olga Chagodayev, newspapers around the world carried the story front page. The January/February 2001 issue of *Chess Life* magazine, in a brief perspective of Capablanca, mentioned that Olga was still alive. Alas, this was not the case. After more than ninety years on earth, even she had to yield to the inevitable. Olga was a very interesting personality of her own, holding court to chess players on a number of occasions in her elegant New York apartment, and both of your co-authors count themselves lucky to have met her. After Capablanca, her second husband, died, she married the famous World War II admiral Joe Clark.

Capablanca died in 1942, fittingly enough, at the Manhattan Chess Club. He received a Cuban burial with full military honors.

CAPABLANCA-ERA CONTEXT AND CONTRACTIONS

During Capa's dominance, Gene Tunney, recipient of the famous "long count," outboxed Dempsey (1926). The push-button elevator (1922) was a sign of the opulence necessary to make life easy. Frozen food first disappointed diners in 1924, the same year loudspeakers amplified our voices. The circuit breaker (1925) and the aerosol spray technique (1926) were more of the non-essentials developed in this prosperous time. The rocket engine began to blast us into a new age of exploration in 1926. Talking movies and television were the latest ideas during Capa's final year on top, and Duke Ellington opened at New York's Cotton Club. U.S. president Calvin Coolidge sat in incongruous near-silence through the boisterousness of the flapper era. In 1927, Gutzon Borglum (50 points!) began sculpting presidential faces into Mt. Rushmore in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

DIE ZEIT IST UM!

Sometimes we think of the pre-eminent in an intellectual field

as being “ahead of their times.” Usually, however, those accurately cursed with this designation don’t win the laurels while they can still smell them. Those so adorned are normally very much within their own *Zeitgeist*. But speaking of time, ours is up for this installment of the world champions.

By discussing only the first three champions, we’ve covered more than 45% of the years from 1866 to 2001! In the next chapter, we’ll actually be able to finish our selective review of the champs and their times. We’ll pick it up again with the problematic Alekhine, during whose reign electro-shock, perhaps appropriately, was first employed.

As both Garry Kasparov and Gutzon Borglum could tell you, even the faces carved in Mt. Rushmore are made from the same rock as the mountains they decorate.



1936 International Masters' Tournament at Nottingham. Standing, left to right: Reuben Fine, Saviely Tartakower, Milan Vidmar, Efim Bogolyubov, T.H. Tyler, Ch'od Alexander, Salo Flohr, Samuel Reshesky, Mikhail Botvinnik and Tournament Director. Seated left to right: Sir George Thomas, Emanuel Lasker, J.R. Capablanca, J.H. Derbyshire, Mrs. Derbyshire, Max Euwe, Alexander Alekhine and William Winter.

Here are some books you can go to for more information on the world champions and their matches (in some cases, more recent editions are likely available):

The Kings of Chess, Hartston, Harper and Row, 1985
The Oxford Companion to Chess, Hooper and Whyld,
Oxford University Press, (2nd ed.) 1992
The Adventure of Chess, Edward Lasker, Dover 1949
Kings of Chess, William Winter, Pittman Press, 1954

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Chapter 6

Talking Movies to Ballistic Missiles

World Championship History, Part II

None of us would be the same person without the context and trappings of our era. What's our government like? Are we lucky enough to avoid the ravages of war? How good or bad is the current state of the economy? Then there are the myriad small but omnipresent appurtenances—our Palm Pilots, laptops, cell phones and Email. These “small” innovations become such big parts of our lives that they change us and the way we live in fundamental ways.

In Chapter 5, we took a look at some of the chess world champs as products of their times. We began with Kasparov, since it was one of his remarks that started us thinking along these lines, and with his arch-rival Karpov. Then we went back to the first official champ, Wilhelm Steinitz, and worked our way through the highlights and contexts of Emanuel Lasker and Jose Raul Capablanca. Indeed, this trio took us up to 1927—the year that Warner Brothers put voices in the actors on the big screen. (Or what was then still the big screen. Cineplexes and home big-screen TVs seem to be converging on the same dimensions.) Now we focus

on Alexander Alekhine and Max Euwe—a pair of opposites if there ever was one. Yet each was a man of his time and place.

SIXTH SENSE FOR THE COMBINATIONAL

Alexander Alekhine, probably the first truly modern champion in his devotion to the study of chess, was one of the greatest players of all time. In fact, he was a zealot, analyzing, it seems, anywhere and always. While his predecessor Capablanca impresses us with the clear beauty of his play, Alekhine amazes us with the depth and dazzle of his combinations. Since Alekhine was first, foremost—and perhaps exclusively—a chess player, let's start with a sample of his art, his famous game against Richard Reti at Baden Baden. Alekhine, not yet champ, plays a game that must have struck fear into the heart of the young generation of “hypermodernists.” One would have to think his sacrifices here are at least partly intuitive. As 1965 Dutch champ Lodewijk Prins put it, “Fortune favors the bold, especially when they are Alekhines.”

RICHARD RETI—ALEXANDER ALEKHINE

Baden-Baden, 1925

FINCHETTO OPENING

1. g3 e5 2. Nf3 e4 3. Nd4 d5 4. d3 exd3 5. Qxd3 Nf6 6. Bg2 Bb4+ 7. Bd2 Bxd2+ 8. Nxd2 0-0 9. c4 Na6 10. cxd5 Nb4 11. Qc4 Nbx d5 12. N2b3 c6 13. 0-0 Re8 14. Rfd1 Bg4 15. Rd2 Qc8 16. Nc5 Bh3!

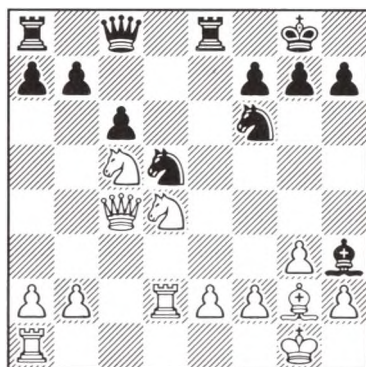


Diagram 14

**“FORTUNE FAVORS THE
BOLD, ESPECIALLY WHEN
THEY ARE ALEKHINES.”**



A diabolical concoction! Alekhine serves up his b-pawn, but if White partakes, he dies of indigestion: 17. Bxh3 Qxh3 18. Nxb7 Ng4 19. Nf3 Nd5 Nde3 20. fxe3 Nxe3

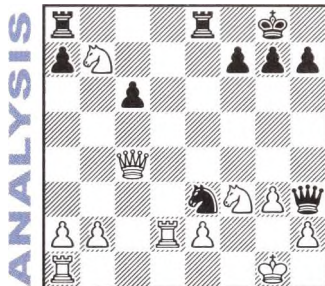


Diagram 15

After 20. ... Nxe3

(threatening mate and the queen—this whole line is sonar-reading of what’s to come) 21. Qxf7+ Kh8 (if 21. ... Kxf7, then 22. Ng5+) 22. Nh4 Rf8, and Black wins the queen, since 23. ... Rf1+ looms).

17. Bf3 Bg4 18. Bg2 Bh3 19. Bf3 Bg4 20. Bh1 h5!

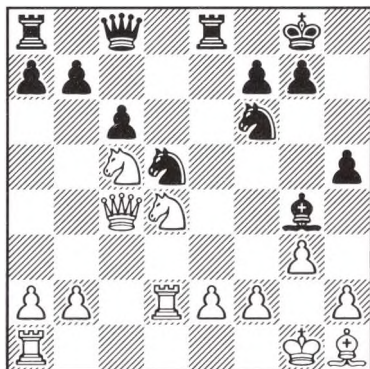


Diagram 16

21. b4 a6 22. Rc1 h4 23. a4 hxg3 24. hxg3 Qc7 25. b5 axb5 26. axb5

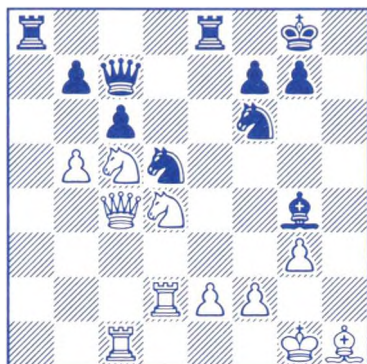


Diagram 17

26. ... Re3!

Reti wouldn't occupy the center, so Alekhine did, with an *en prise* rook! He plops it down where it can immediately be taken by White's f-pawn, but if White makes this capture, he can quickly hit the showers after 27. fxe3 Qxg3+ 28. Bg2 Nxe3, when both the White queen and checkmate are threatened, and there isn't a move that stops the checkmate.

27. Nf3 cxb5 28. Qxb5 Nc3 29. Qxb7 Qxb7 30. Nxb7 Nxe2+ 31. Kh2 Ne4 32. Rc4

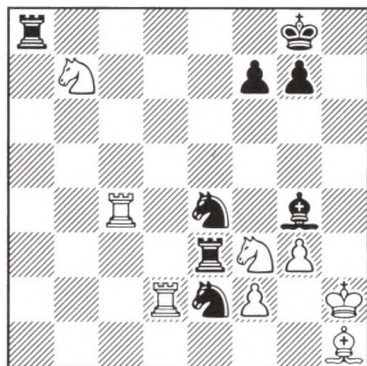


Diagram 18

It's typical Alekhine that the shot 26. ... Re3! only began the tactics. Through 32 moves, material has stayed even. Black now

takes the f-pawn, but his pieces seem to be in danger. Just watch the tactical twists and turns Alekhine steers into and through.

32. ... Nxf2 33. Bg2 Be6 34. Rcc2 Ng4+ 35. Kh3 Ne5+ 36. Kh2 Rxf3 37. Rxe2

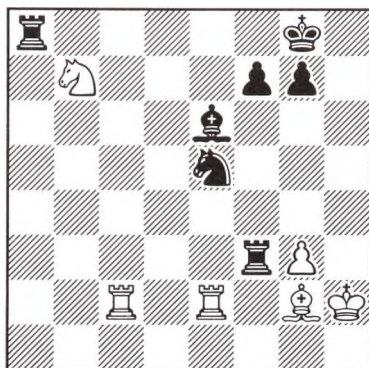


Diagram 19

37. ... Ng4+ 38. Kh3 Ne3+ 39. Kh2 Nxc2 40. Bxf3 Nd4 41. Rf2 Nxf3+ 42. Rxf3 Bd5, White resigns.

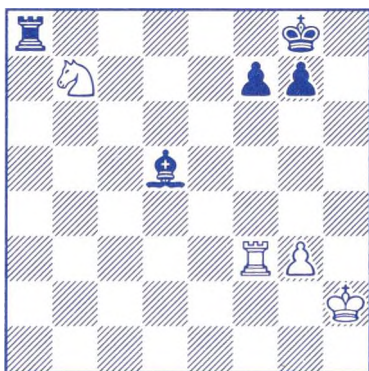


Diagram 20

Sixteen moves after his stunning 26. ... Re3! Alekhine pounds in the last nail. Aftermaths, as always, look simple.

DISPLACED PERSON

Alekhine has generally taken a beating as a human being, and he does seem to have made that very possible. After WWI, he became a symbol of the chess player as amoral opportunist. There's evidence he was a collaborator for two totalitarian regimes. We'll argue that—with the admission that his scars are wide brushstrokes indeed—he falls into our pattern, being in this case a Dorian Gray portrait of his tumultuous times.

On a number of occasions, Alekhine was what they used to call a DP—a displaced person. These initials were, in the years following the World Wars, among the most widely known acronyms in the world. Millions were displaced throughout Europe alone. DPs had to learn how to survive where they found themselves. To Alekhine, a true chess fanatic, survival meant playing chess.

Alekhine was born in Moscow in 1892 into a noble family. His father was a land-owning member of the last Duma and his mother, who first taught him chess, was from a wealthy industrial family. In Moscow, he studied for a career in law, but soon gave it up for the siren's call of the 64 squares. He certainly didn't enjoy the immediate success of Capablanca, or even of Lasker. But he worked at the game zealously, and he began to win tournaments.

He was playing in the Mannheim tournament in Germany in 1914 when World War I erupted. The internment of the players near Mannheim is a famous historical episode in chess. Alekhine became a displaced person for the first time.



Richard Reti

Many of the masters who had convened there after St. Petersburg 1914, including Efim Bogolubov, were forced to stay throughout the war, and a number of tournaments were organized for them. (Bogolubov, incidentally, enjoyed the forced vacation and established a lifelong home in the Black Forest, marrying a local woman.) Alekhine, however, was soon released to go home. Later, he

invented grandiose tales of an heroic escape. Back in Russia, it's true that he served in the equivalent of the Red Cross on the Austrian front, and was wounded.

The Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917 left him penniless. He was displaced again. Somehow, despite the fact that he was an ex-noble, and therefore a "White" Russian, he used his schooling to get a job with the Soviet secret police. This was a double-edged opportunity. Alekhine was reportedly at one point scheduled to be shot, but was saved at the last minute by a message from a chess player with high ranking in the Party.



*Alexander Alekhine,
4th world champion*

He then played in some Moscow tournaments, winning the Soviet Championship in 1920. He was determined to find a way to be permitted to travel abroad, and with that goal in mind, joined the Communist Party, becoming an interpreter. Alekhine's first wife was a "White" Russian who was the mother of his daughter. Now Alekhine made a more politically correct match, marrying a Swiss Communist delegate, thereby getting permission to leave the country.

Unsurprisingly, he split up with his new wife quickly and moved to Paris, where he married yet another woman, the widow of a Russian general, a wife who would be better received among Russian expatriates (displaced Russians like Alekhine) in Paris. Indeed, these countrymen-in-exile held a dinner in his honor. Playing to their sentiments, Alekhine proclaimed that the Bolsheviks would soon be out of business. Perhaps he didn't anticipate that his remarks would make the headlines and Moscow would find out about his comments. Later, he tried to patch things up.

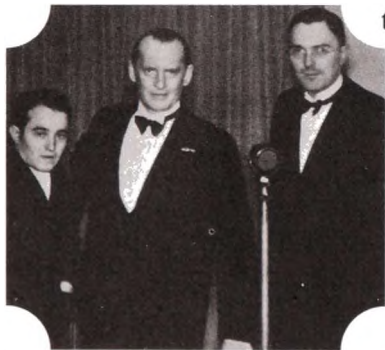


ALEKHINE WAS A DEDICATED DRINKER THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE.

BEATING RAUL

Working out of Paris, Alekhine amassed an impressive record of victories, eventually finding a sponsor that put up the \$10,000 in gold that his friend Capablanca demanded for a championship match purse. Few in 1927 expected Alekhine to win, least of all Capa. But Alekhine had worked obsessively to analyze Capablanca's few weaknesses, and to eliminate his own. Alekhine won the match and became the fourth world champion. From that moment on, his behavior toward Capablanca became adversarial, avoiding talk of a rematch. Alekhine spent the rest of his reign refusing to play in tournaments in which Capa took part. (They played only once more, in Nottingham 1936, where Capablanca won.) Capa took all this very hard.

After winning the championship, Alekhine followed Lasker's example and returned to university life, this time at the famous Sorbonne in Paris where he studied law. He subsequently claimed that he was awarded a doctorate, but there is no evidence of his achievement. Alekhine rolled up an impressive list of firsts in strong tournaments throughout Europe, and even at Pasadena 1932. He remarried yet again, this



*Salor Flohr, Alexander Alekhine and
Max Euwe looking dapper in 1938*

time to an American-born widow who maintained British citizenship.

Alekhine was a dedicated drinker throughout his life. After he won the championship, his alcoholism got even worse. When he played Euwe in 1935, by most accounts Alekhine was at times quite drunk during actu-

al play. He lost as he had won, amid the surprise of most of the world. The tall, multi-talented Euwe immediately and modestly predicted that he would not be champion for long. A rematch was held in 1937. Alekhine may have loved only one thing more than alcohol—his title as world champion. He applied his considerable will power to get himself and his game in shape, regaining the championship relatively easily.

Alekhine had just agreed to a match with Mikhail Botvinnik in 1939 when war goose-stepped throughout Europe, trampling everyone's plans. At first, Alekhine acted patriotically toward his adopted homeland of France. In Buenos Aires at the chess Olympiad captaining the French, he refused to permit his team to play the Germans. He returned to France, enlisting in the army as an interpreter. When France fell, he fled to the free city of Marseille, where he applied for a visa to Cuba, even offering to play the long-awaited match with Capablanca to get the document! None was forthcoming and he went to Lisbon, trying there for a U.S. visa. But a series of anti-Semitic articles appeared, attributed to Alekhine, in the Nazi-controlled press. No visa arrived. Alekhine vehemently denied writing the articles, but in the 1950s, the original manuscripts of these articles—in Alekhine's own handwriting—were found in his late wife's belongings. It seems that once again, a displaced Alekhine had hedged his bets.

He voluntarily returned to France, playing in Nazi-organized tournaments. After the war, disgraced, he lived in Portugal in poverty and failing health. He was aware he didn't have much time left. He had severe cirrhosis of the liver and other ailments

**ALEKHINE WAS THE FIRST
CHAMPION TO LOSE AND
REGAIN HIS TITLE, AND
HE WAS THE ONLY ONE TO
DIE HOLDING THE TITLE.**



resulting from years of heavy drinking. He continued to look forward to a match with Botvinnik, studying chess as usual. On March 23, 1946, he received the telegram confirming the match. The next day he died alone, either of a heart attack or from choking on a piece of meat—the reports varied—, while studying his final chess position. A photographer was somehow on the scene and left the world with a grim, posthumous image of the world champion, displaced for the very last time. Evidently cold in his little apartment, he sat at his small table in a winter coat. Empty plates were stacked in disarray in front of him while, on a nearby table, the pieces stood neatly in starting position. At the time of his death, it seemed no one was in a hurry to claim the honor of burying the chess world champion. Later he was put to rest in Montparnasse cemetery in Paris. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union wished to move his body to Russia, but his widow protested.

Alekhine was the first champion to lose and regain his title, and he was the only one to die holding the title. If nothing else, he left the world with many beautiful chess games—perhaps more than any other champion.

ALEKHINE'S ACCOUTREMENTS

Obviously, the Bolshevik revolution, two world wars and their aftermaths had life-changing impact on the fourth world champion. The innovations available to the man in the street, when there was an unbombed street in this era, proliferated. At the beginning of his reign, talking movies premiered. Warner Brothers' *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature-length "talkie," appeared in 1927. The first true all-talking, all-dialogue movie was another Warner production, a gangster film entitled *Lights of New York* that debuted in 1928, the same year the iron lung was invented, which for many years played an important role in saving polio victims in these pre-Salk-vaccine days. Coaxial cable, the electroencephalograph, the generator, and the jet engine—all were patented in 1929. Freon, high-octane gas, nylon, the electron microscope, laundrettes, the Richter scale, fiberglass, the fluorescent light, the first jet-aircraft flight, the helicopter and the ballpoint pen were 1930s breakthroughs.

Then a host of WWII-driven inventions, such as radar and the automated computer filled the last decade of Alekhine's life, along with the aerosol spray can (1941), the first nuclear reactor (1942), the aqualung (1943), and the ballistic missile (1944). The first atom bomb was used in war in 1945, exploded in the air over the populace of Hiroshima, Japan. The post-war Nuremberg trials (1945-6) took place in a German city previously known as the toy capital of the world. The outcome established unequivocally the legal principle that "following orders" is not an acceptable excuse for war crimes.

Consider the changes during Alekhine's span. In 1892, the year of his birth, African-American Sarah Boone invented (and patented) the ironing board, and another African-American, O.E. Brown, patented a horseshoe. By his death in 1946, mankind was already in the rocket age and living under the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Our second Alekhine sampling took place 13 years after his masterpiece against Reti. Alekhine, now in his mid to late forties, had lost and recaptured the world title. Had age, the constant displacement and drinking dulled the edge of his combinative saber? By the way, his Finnish opponent here was no pushover. In fact, he came in fourth in the same strong tournament.

Alekhine was laid to rest in Montparnasse cemetery in Paris. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union wanted to move his body to Russia, but his widow protested.



ALEXANDER ALEKHINE—EERO BOOK

Margate, 1938

QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. e3 e6 5. Bxc4 c5 6. 0-0 Nc6
7. Qe2 a6 8. Nc3 b5 9. Bb3 b4 10. d5! Na5 11. Ba4+ Bd7 12.
dxe6 fxe6

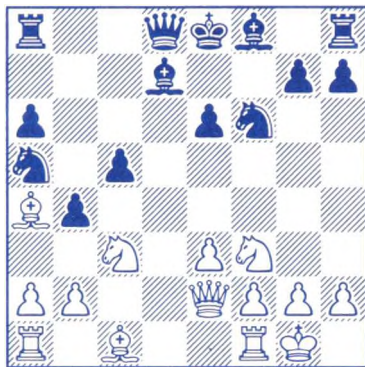


Diagram 21

13. Rd1! bxc3 14. Rxd7! Nxd7 15. Ne5 Ra7 16. bxc3!

A cold-blooded move. Alekhine points out that after 16. Qh5+ g6 17. Nxc6 hxg6 18. Qxh8 Kf7, Black should win. But chess-software program Fritz claims 18. Qg6+ draws. Fritz has never touched a drop.

16. ... Ke7 17. e4 Nf6 18. Bg5 Qc7 19. Bf4 Qb6 20. Rd1 g6
21. Bg5 Bg7



**EUWE IS SOMETIMES
VERY INCORRECTLY
DISPARAGED. THE TRUTH
IS THAT HE WAS A POWERFUL
PLAYER.**

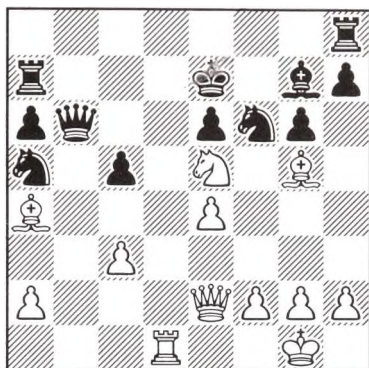


Diagram 22

22. Nd7 Rxd7 23. Rxd7+ Kf8 24. Bxf6 Bxf6 25. e5 1-0

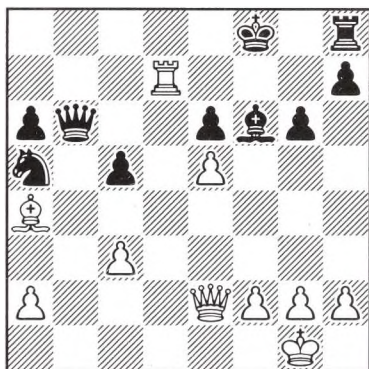


Diagram 23

If 25. ... Bg7, then 26. Qf3+ and mate. If 25. ... Be7, then 26. Qf3+ Kg8 27. Rxe7 Qb1+ 28. Bd1 Qf5 29. Qa8+ Qf8 30. Re8.

Reuben Fine said that the Alekhine-Book game was “the most remarkable tactical conception in chess history.”

The compliments Alekhine got, he had to earn. Few during his later life were inclined to give undemanded praise. And despite his many brilliant, legitimate combinations, Alekhine didn’t seem above claiming to play a few brilliancies that never actually occurred on the board!

MAX EUWE

Machgielis Euwe was born in 1901. Other than Paul Morphy, he was the only amateur ever to be considered world champion. (In fact, in 1928, Euwe won the second and final world amateur championship.) His chess achievements, earned as they were against full-time chess professionals, are an amazing feat for someone with so many other interests (as a young man he was even a boxing champion) and so little time to devote to chess.

Euwe won the Dutch championship at 20 (and then won it 12 more times). In the same year, 1921, he played in his very first strong international event in Vienna, placing second behind Saemisch, and ahead of Breyer, Gruenfeld and Maroczy. Euwe was an academic, teaching mathematics from 1924, and earning his doctorate in 1926. In fact, he had sometimes to arrange to play important matches during holidays! During the Christmas break of 1926-7, he narrowly lost a match to Alekhine (soon to become the world champion) $+2 =5 -3$. During the Easter vacation of 1928, he defeated Colle with $+5 =1$, and then a few days later barely lost to Bogolubov $+2 =5 -3$. In the 1930s, he achieved some notable results in both matches and tournaments, culminating in his 1935 title match win over Alekhine.

Euwe is sometimes very incorrectly disparaged, perhaps because of Alekhine's drinking during their first match. The truth is that Euwe was a powerful player. He found time to play in four outstanding tournaments (and a less important event) during his two-year reign, always placing among the top finishers—he came in first in two of the events, second in one and third in another. In these competitions, he placed ahead of the likes of Alekhine, Keres, and Flohr. During this period he scored two wins and a draw against the former champ. It's true that in 1937 Alekhine beat him handily in their return match. However, even after the war in 1946, Euwe placed second at Groningen, behind Botvinnik but ahead of Smyslov, Najdorf, Szabo, Flohr and Boleslavsky.

CHESS TRIVIA TO THE MAX

After Alekhine died in 1946, FIDE delegates assembled to deal

with the world championship vacancy. They decided that Euwe should have the crown. But the Soviet delegation, delayed en route, showed up the next day and forcefully nullified the previous day's decision. The throne was declared vacant. So, for one day in 1947—the same year that the Polaroid camera was invented, and that legendary test pilot Chuck Yeager, flying the Bell X-1, broke the “sound barrier”—Euwe was a re-crowned champion.

After that, his professional duties, other interests and age kept him from being truly competitive at the top level. Euwe had a distinguished career away from chess, and also served as president of FIDE from 1970 to 1978. One of his duties was to preside as the supreme arbiter of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match. Euwe died in 1981. According to Alekhine, no mean judge, Euwe was a first-class tactician who seldom made a bad combination. Here's one of Euwe's games, important to his winning the title. It's sometimes known as the “Pearl of Zandvoort.”

MAX EUWE—ALEXANDER ALEKHINE

World Championship (game 26), Zandvoort, Netherlands, 1935

DUTCH DEFENSE

1. d4 e6 2. c4 f5 3. g3 Bb4+ 4. Bd2 Be7 5. Bg2 Nf6 6. Nc3 0-0 7. Nf3 Ne4 8. 0-0 b6 9. Qc2 Bb7 10. Ne5 Nxc3 11. Bxc3 Bxg2 12. Kxg2 Qc8 13. d5 d6 14. Nd3 e5 15. Kh1 c6 16. Qb3 Kh8 17. f4 e4 18. Nb4 c5 19. Nc2 Nd7 20. Ne3 Bf6 21. Nxf5 Bxc3 22. Nxd6 Qb8 23. Nxe4 Bf6 24. Nd2 g5 25. e4 gxf4 26. gxf4 Bd4 27. e5 Qe8 28. e6 Rg8 29. Nf3 Qg6 30. Rg1! Bxg1 31. Rxg1 Qf6 32. Ng5 Rg7 33. exd7 Rxd7 34. Qe3 Re7 35. Ne6 Rf8 36. Qe5 Qxe5 37. fxe5 Rf5 38. Re1 h6 39. Nd8 Rf2 40. e6 Rd2 41. Nc6 Re8 42. e7 b5 43. Nd8 Kg7 44. Nb7 Kf6 45. Re6+ Kg5 46. Nd6 Rxe7 47. Ne4+ 1-0



Diagram 24
After 29. Qg6

The great Mikhail Botvinnik quickly took possession of the throne vacated by the death of Alekhine.

After Euwe ...



Mikhail Botvinnik



Vassily Smyslov



Mikhail Tal



Tigran Petrosian

6th world champion: *The result of a marriage between science and chess, Mikhail Botvinnik was the Soviet Man who propelled the Soviet Union juggernaut into world dominance, from FIDE to the UN. (See Chapter 3.)*

7th world champion: *A musician's son, and himself an accomplished baritone, Vassily Smyslov injected an artistic interlude into chess at the top during the thaw in the Cold War following Stalin's death in 1953.*

8th world champion: *Bohemian, iconoclastic and irreverent, Mikhail Tal, rebel but not revolutionary, was a resident of the "big thaw" during the Khrushchev years. (See chapter 2.)*

9th world champion: *Tigran Petrosian was an example of the new Soviet bourgeoisie in the early Breshnev years. Dachas, cars, a valuable stamp collection and a big, well-appointed apartment in Moscow—in other words, la dolce vita.*

10th world champion: *Boris Spassky was another man of his time—a dissident in the "age of dissidents": Sakharov, Bukovsky, Solzhenitsyn and Sharansky.*

11th world champion: *Bobby Fischer was seen as the Gary Cooper who strapped on his six-guns and brought an end to the Soviet hegemony of chess, beating Spassky in Reykjavik in the most famous chess match of all time. The U.S. eclipses the embarrassment of Sputnik by landing on the moon, and Bobby is a one-man Apollo project.*



Boris Spassky

12th & 13th world champions: *In our day, the very different (but in their extreme partisanship, similar) Karpov and Kasparov were kings of chess.*

BrainGames Champion: *Vladimir Kramnik defeated Kasparov in a match sponsored by the BrainGames internet company. He represents the post-communist, apolitical, "Western" Russia, laid-back, democratic and individualistic.*



Bobby Fischer



Anatoly Karpov



Garry Kasparov



Vladimir Kramnik

Chapter 7

Happy is the Sport that has Heroes

Imagine coming home on a Saturday from what is normally a chess afternoon. It is usually difficult to make this sound exciting to your spouse. But suppose this particular afternoon had been the World Chess Hall of Fame's second annual induction.

"Play chess with anyone interesting today, dear?"

"Oh—Boris Spassky, Susan Polgar, Lev Alburt, Walter Browne and Alexandra Kosteniuk. Just some world and U.S. champs."

TAG-TEAM SIMUL

Such could have been the household conversations on Sunday night, March 2, 2003, after the finale of the Second Annual Induction Festival at the World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum in Miami. The windup was an extremely rare, tag-team simultaneous exhibition, by Spassky, Polgar, Alburt, Browne and Kosteniuk, aided by fellow GM Sam Palatnik and IM Michael Zlotnikov. Such a simul now is a trademark tradition of Hall induction festivities. At any other venue, fans would pay more than the price of an autographed photo of Capablanca on



**FIDE VICE PRESIDENT
E. STEVEN DOYLE AND
FIDE TREASURER
DAVID JARRETT GAVELED
BOTVINNIK, SMYSLOV, TAL,
PETROSIAN AND SPASSKY
INTO THE WORLD CHESS HALL ...**

Ebay to take on one of the world-famous players. But during the Hall of Fame weekend, it was free to the attending public—thanks to the generosity of the masters themselves, who donated their efforts.

Outside on the Museum grounds, those among the approximately 2,000 visitors who weren't playing in the simulcs could watch the Renaissance Historical Society of Florida put on a "live chess" exhibition. With their trademark exuberance, costumed, sword fighting members of the group portrayed the 1851 game Mayet vs. Anderssen—captures were preceded by combat and the losing pieces were carried off on stretchers.

The two-day celebration actually began on Saturday morning, March 1, with the first "Put Yourself in the Hall of Fame Open," where 220 students and adults played for the honor of having their names displayed permanently in the Hall. Additional prizes were donated by Excalibur Electronics.

PASSING THE BUTTER TO BORIS

Saturday night, more than 120 people from all over the world attended the official induction dinner. Besides a who's-who of chess in the world, the gathering included three of the new inductees: tenth world champion Boris Spassky, six-time U.S. Champ Walter Browne and three-time U.S. champ Lev Alburt. The family of Donald Byrne was there. So were world woman's champion Susan Polgar, woman's vice-champion Alexandra Kosteniuk and GM Sam Palatnik. One of the delightful traditions of the World Chess Hall of Fame induction dinners is the seating of the chess glitterati throughout the room at tables with the other

diners. So you never know who your table partners will be. (Come next year and you could be the one passing the butter to Boris.)

In 2003 FIDE added five plaques to its World Chess Hall of Fame. Legendary world champs Mikhail Botvinnik, Vassily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal, Tigran Petrosian and Boris Spassky joined the likenesses of the inaugural five, brought in at the end of 2001—Paul Morphy, Wilhelm Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker, José Raul Capablanca and Robert Fischer. FIDE Vice President E. Steven Doyle and FIDE Treasurer David Jarrett gaveled Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian and Spassky into the World Chess Hall of Fame at Saturday night's dinner. Doyle's participation was particularly appropriate, because he was the USCF president who, with then USCF Executive Director Gerry Dullea, started the U.S. Hall of Fame in 1986, housed as a beginning in the basement of the USCF offices in New Windsor, New York.

The U.S. Chess Hall of Fame added three more—Lev Alburt, Walter Browne and Donald Byrne. They joined the previously honored 31 American heroes. U.S. Chess Trust Chairman Harold Winston made the official proclamations.

The Historical Renaissance Society of Florida began the evening on a bygone note with a reenacted sword fight, followed by a few mildly bawdy songs from the 1400s. Emceeding the event, Al explained to the multinational crowd that in America, when we want to promote something, we generally apply sex and violence—and tonight we were simply reversing the usual order.

HAPPY IS THE SPORT THAT HAS HEROES

The highlight, of course, was hearing from the greats themselves. Susan Polgar, the eldest of the famous Polgar sisters, was the first champ to speak. Susan was the first woman to earn the grandmaster's title (through the usual system of achieving norms) and won the women's world championship in 1996. She's never lost that crown in a match, although FIDE scheduled a defense (against protocol, in the challenger's home country) when Susan was pregnant and couldn't play. Susan praised the honorees and

re-pledged herself to promoting chess in the U.S. and to playing for the U.S. in the upcoming Olympiad.

It may be, as they say, that “No man is a hero to his valet.” But if so, there seemed to be no valets seated at the dinner that night. Indeed, we would say, distorting Brecht (but only about three pennies’ worth) that happy is the sport that has heroes. And chess that night was indeed a happy sport. We heard from legends who, to our delight, still walk among us—and in a generous and down-to-earth way. (And it was clear that all of them were touched by the honor of induction into the only official Hall of Fame and Museum of both USCF and FIDE.



GM Lev Albut

LEV ALBUT—CO-AUTHOR

Lev Albut, who escaped from the old Soviet Union in 1979 to come to the U.S., was uncharacteristically modest in his acceptance speech. Noting the presence of his old friend Boris Spassky, Albut—who is now retired from professional chess and occupies himself with teaching, writing and publishing—said, “I am sure that many years from now, millions of chess players will continue to learn from the great attacking games of Boris Spassky.

It’s my hope that at least some will learn these attacks from my books.”

DONALD BYRNE—“HE WAS EVERY BIT AS GOOD A FATHER AS HE WAS A CHESS PLAYER.”

Madge and Chris Byrne were next at the podium to speak for husband and father Donald. Chris, who now teaches game theory, among other things, at Penn State, where Donald taught English, explained the essence of his dad to the crowd. “He taught me that self-improvement was the goal of competition. He was every bit as good a father as he was a chess player. He was always ready to encourage people and to teach people and to make peo-

ple laugh.” Chris’ mom Madge accepted the plaque, saying that it was “An honor long wished for him by his family and by many of the young men he coached at Penn State. In my eyes, Don was a knight in shining armor. He was a brilliant man of honor and great courage, generosity and kindness. Everyone who knew him would grant that he had one great power ... he could create humor in the most dire of situations. I always remember him smiling.”



Robert (Donald's GM brother), Madge and Chris Byrne present an autographed poster at the time of Donald Byrne's induction into the World Chess Hall of Fame.

WALTER BROWNE—“WHAT’S GOING TO BECOME OF MY WORK?”

Browne is a six-time U.S. champion, a three-time U.S. Open champ and an eleven-time National Open winner. He’s also the organizer of the World Chess Blitz Association and publisher of its magazine, “Blitz.” Browne said he was “semi-retired” from chess and has recently taken a 40-hour-a-week job as a casino host (he’s also a poker champion). “As you get older, you have more and more responsibilities,” he said. He recalled making a record-breaking, nationwide series of simuls in the 1970s—“I traveled 16,500 miles in two months, playing 1,500 games in 40 states in 50 simuls and lectures.” He also recalled his classic game with Spassky in 1978 in Tilburg, in which Boris got the opening advantage, but Browne found a tactical string of moves 20 moves long that included a rook sacrifice. Spassky defended brilliantly,

“WHEN I THINK OF THE MUSEUM AND WHAT’S GOING ON HERE, I THINK THIS IS REALLY GOING TO KEEP MY WORK, HOPEFULLY, FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, FOREVER.”





*Frank Sinatra with Walter Browne,
as Caesar looks on.*

and in the end, the game between the Olympians was a draw.

His induction was well timed, he said. "Last year I had neck cancer. I didn't know if I were going to be here. I thought, 'All that I've done, it's all going to go down the drain ... what's going to happen ... what's going to become of my work?' When I

think of the Museum and what's going on here, I think this is really going to keep my work, hopefully, for a thousand years, forever. That's what I hope is going to happen." And by the way, he said that he was still shooting for that seventh U.S. championship.

On the future of chess, Browne said that there were "Lot's more tournaments now, more opportunities, and promising young players like Nakamura. And it's wonderful that Susan Polgar is going to be playing, and for the U.S."

BORIS SPASSKY—"MY BEAUTIFUL FUTURE IS IN THE PAST."

Boris Spassky would be the model hero in any sport. He's witty, honest, generous and self-deprecating. Spassky became world champion in 1969, during the golden age of that title—when it took placing at the top of a zonal and then an interzonal, winning candidates' matches and then, finally, overcoming a real champion under time controls and conditions that brought out the breadth and depth of both competitors. Boris played in the most widely reported chess match of all time—defending his title against Bobby Fischer in Reykjavik in 1972. Although it's true that he eventually lost that match, twice during the proceedings he consciously passed up opportunities, provided by his mercurial opponent, to retain his crown by packing up and going home. Because he didn't, Bobby won the title and Boris suffered the retribution of the old Soviet chess apparatchiks, who didn't share his

sense of sportsmanship.

The keynote speaker at the induction dinner, Boris talked for more than an hour because the crowd wouldn't let him stop. He invited all questions and called Browne back to the podium when Walter turned journalist, asking the best questions of the night. (See the next chapter, "Boris Spassky: Notes from the Underground," for some of Spassky's comments.)

At the evening's end, the crowd stood to applaud like parents at a nursery-school recital. They apparently agreed with USCF President John McCrary, who said, "It was one of the warmest gatherings of the chess world. And it was one of the most historically significant."

The events were sponsored, as usual, by the U.S. Chess Trust, the U.S. Chess Federation and the International Chess Foundation. You can make a virtual visit to the World Chess Hall of Fame by visiting www.ChessMuseum.org. When you can, take an in-person tour. Although the Hall's normal hours are Thursday through Saturday, 10:30 AM to 5 PM and Sunday from 1:00 to 5 PM, the staff will open any weekday for those whose schedules dictate another time. Group tours can also be arranged. Charter memberships, which include permanent recognition, are still available. Call 786-242-HALL (4255) or e-mail ChessMuseum@aol.com for information or appointments.



Alexandra Kosteniuk is as much at home on the model's runway as she is here, at the tag-team simultaneous exhibition.



Boris Spassky speaking to the crowd at his induction into the World Chess Hall of Fame in Miami.



Boris Spassky in the World Chess Hall of Fame at the chess table built for his old rival, Bobby Fischer.

For more
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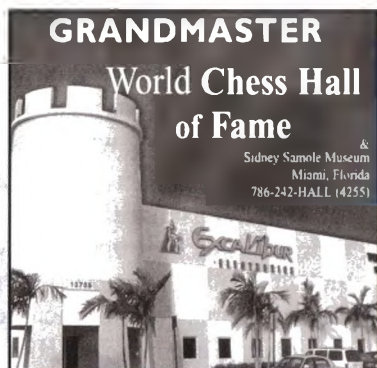
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Chapter 8

Boris Spassky:

Notes from the Underground

Boris Spassky these days grants only the rarest of interviews. He says “I try to live somehow a little bit underground. Actually, I’m somewhere between Bobby (his most famous rival, Fischer) and the underground.” But at the end of February, Spassky traveled to Miami from his adopted Paris with his elegant wife Marina for his induction into the World Chess Hall of Fame. Lev and Al—together with our wives Lana and Daphne—were fortunate enough to spend considerable time, including a few dinners featuring some conversation-inspiring vintages, with the Spasskys.

Boris is a compelling combination of the charismatic and easy-going. He sports a good-natured, deflating humor that swims always just below the surface, lurking like a stingray. Spassky’s English vocabulary is impressive, his voice resonant and deep, and his delivery can be animated. His knowledge and conversation run the gamut of the interesting. But he seems a particular student of world history and of human nature. Besides these traits, you get the sense that he is a true gentleman-sportsman-champion: correct and commanding.



**BOTVINNIK GAVE
ME TYPICAL ADVICE:
“BORIS, PLEASE
TAKE THE WATERMELON.
SHAKE HIS HAND.” SO I DID.**

The following is really a series of remarks from Boris over four days. Everyone at the World Chess Hall of Fame & Sidney Samole Museum 2003 induction dinner, especially Walter Browne, deserves credit for this interview. In his anecdotes, Boris sometimes refers to himself as “Spassky,” but for quite the reverse effect that Caesar used the same technique: Boris does it to add a self-deprecating, whimsical touch.

On his chess life, watermelons, and Botvinnik:

Caissa must punish me because I did not work very hard in my life for chess. Chess was easy for me. My chess life is very full of stupid stories. It’s very important to maintain your collection of stupid stories. I can only tell some stupid stories now. My beautiful future is in the past. [With mock tragedy in his deep voice—a self-deflating remark typical of Boris’ humor.]

Once I was passing through a bazaar with Botvinnik. A man stopped me and said “I would like to make a good present of a watermelon.” [Boris makes a gesture indicating he didn’t want to carry around a huge watermelon all day.] But then Botvinnik gave me typical advice: “Boris, please take the watermelon. Shake his hand.” So I did.

On Botvinnik and a proposed match with Fischer:

Botvinnik once had an adjourned game against Spassky. It was adjourned in my favor, but probably a draw existed. I saw Botvinnik in the restaurant and said, “Let’s look at your game with Spassky.” We did. Botvinnik drew the game.

I was very friendly with Botvinnik. Did you know that there was a match planned between Botvinnik and Bobby Fischer? [Looking around the room, making eye-contact with his listen-

ers.] I think this is not generally known.

The match was proposed to be played in Leiden, Holland, in 1969. It was to be Botvinnik's last serious competition. He asked me to help him prepare. He worked very hard. Botvinnik got up at 7 AM every day. Spassky got up at 8 AM. He collected games of Bobby and asked me to prepare a sort of profile of Fischer, which I did.

After two or three days of study, Botvinnik realized Bobby was tough! Botvinnik suffered. But after a week, Botvinnik was happy. He said to me in his usual way [imitating a halting pontifical, deep-throated Botvinnik], "Dear Boris, now I realize who Bobby Fischer is. He is a young Smyslov!" This was absolute nonsense, but typical Botvinnik. He would have had no chance in this match, which never happened.

On Keres: Keres was always my real idol. He was a gentleman, a very modest, cultured man. The man was full of dignity, without any political ideas about and intervention into the fate of any chess player.

On FIDE and world chess: As I always said, (quoting FIDE's Latin motto meaning "We are one family.") "Gens una sumus. Now let's all kill each other!" [Laughs.]

Our kingdom does not have borders. It is the same game in the U.S. and China.

On the first USSR versus the Rest of the World Match, in 1970: I remember being so impressed by our team: Botvinnik, Smyslov, Spassky, Petrosian, Korchnoi, Keres, Geller, Stein! I was then reminded of the story of the Darius, king of Persia 2,500 years ago, who became dejected after reviewing his impressive army of 100,000, including elephants—the ICBMs of his day! His advisors asked why he was sad. Darius said that it was because in 100 years nothing would remain of the beauty and power of his shining army. I felt this way about the USSR team.

The USSR was much stronger. But when the Rest of the World nearly won—big surprise! During the years when I was champion of world, probably that was the most annoying and unpleasant

event. I was very disappointed by this match. The USSR didn't have a team. We had only a collection of stars. But this is not enough.

On world champions Vassily Smyslov and Tigran Petrosian: Smyslov is a philosopher and a fantastic talent with a sense of harmony. His principal weakness was in the middlegame. Smyslov had a fantastic conception that he was talking to God and that He told him he would be world champion again. When Smyslov lost (to Kasparov in 1984), it was unbelievable to him.

Petrosian [whom Spassky challenged and lost to in 1966 and challenged and beat in 1969] was clever. Not every world champion had such a sense of humor! He (maintained) a quite friendly and very correct relationship during our rivalry. Later Kasparov and Karpov started to fight outside of chess. Chess is not so human as before somehow.

On Bobby Fischer: [Note: It's clear that Boris likes his old rival. It's also evident he keeps some secrets on Bobby's behalf, showing a respect for personal information.] I have a lot of respect for Bobby. Maybe he's a little bit crazy. Maybe not so much like the tragic Paul Morphy [the other U.S. and world champion in the Hall]. I'm a great admirer of Paul Morphy. I would like to study the information about Paul Morphy in the World Chess Hall of Fame. Very soon I am going to meet Bobby—probably in Japan. He's very mysterious. But I feel that he needs me and I need him.

On the 1972 world championship match with Fischer: There was very great pressure in the match of 1972. Twice I could have escaped from the match and preserved the title for the Soviet authorities. So the authorities were not very happy with my stubbornness. Yes, there was great pressure in 1972. Not political pressure, but about 600 correspondents from various agencies. Something happened. Something was very strange [to create this media frenzy].

I was working [at chess] in 1969. But 1970 was my last year on top. In 1971 I was official champion of the world, but I was not

number one anymore. My best years were between 1964 and '70. I think at that time I was strongest—even stronger than Bobby because of the middlegame. I was stronger in the middlegame than Bobby. But Bobby was stronger in the opening and in the endgame.

But in 1970 when he won 6-0, 6-0 against Taimanov and Larsen [in the candidates' matches leading to the '72 Boris-Bobby showdown], he exhibited fantastic quality of play.

On the 1992 world championship match with Fischer: But 20 years later we were very nice retired people! [Uproarious laughter from the listeners].

The second match gave me very nice pension! I was in the [financial] minus so I had to pay my debts.

Bobby also had several hundred dollars, not more. So Mr. Milosevic [Slobodan Milosevic, then president of Serbia; Jezdimir Vasiljevic, President of Jugoskandic Bank, was the event sponsor] found us. I have very good recollections about this match. But it was very hard for me. We played 30 games and almost all of them were fighting games.

[Historical note: Fischer stands to this day under an indictment by the U.S. government for playing in the 1992 match in Sveti Stefan, a resort off the coast of Montenegro, 50 miles from the war then taking place in Bosnia. But it was quite legal for Spassky, a French citizen, to play in the match. An irony—Spassky can visit the U.S., but Fischer would certainly risk arrest.]

Bobby was struggling in the beginning of the 1992 match. But he had a fantastic ability to come very fast into his best form. ... I had a special small room. Bobby complained that the toilet was very noisy. Typical Bobby. We played—4 days in a row; we played 9 hours in a row. He had seven bodyguards, I had only three bodyguards! [With mock embarrassment.]

After the first half of the match, I suggested we swim around Sveti Stefan. "Is it possible that there are any sharks?" Bobby wanted to know. "No, no, no." I said. "But once, over 40 years ago

there was one shark that bit one student.” So Bobby said no.

[Note: Since the time this article first appeared, a Yugoslav reader has written to point out that during the approximate time of the match, a man-eating shark, extremely rare for those waters, was indeed noted off the coast of Sveti Stefan. Perhaps, as usual, Bobby was seeing deeper, below the surface, than the rest of us!]

Question from Walter Browne: There are stories that the banker absconded with the money [after the 1992 match].

Spassky: “No, no, no, no—don’t worry about this!”

[Crowd laughs.]

Question from Al Lawrence: Boris, did Bobby put his winnings in the sponsor’s bank? [Historical note: Vasiljevic’s bank later went bust, and he was detained getting off an airplane in Israel while carrying at least a million dollars U.S. in cash.]

Spassky: Oh. This is top secret!

Another question from the crowd: I heard you took your own money [in cash from Serbia] out on a train—is that correct?

[Spassky says nothing; only putting his fingers in his ears.]

When I meet Bobby, I never asked him about his private life. He liked me, and was very friendly.

People always wanted to get something from him. If you want to be in contact with him, you must be very, very pure, like a true angel. ... The biggest tragedy was when he became champion, there would be another explosion of chess—as in the days of Paul Morphy. Not only for the U.S., but for the world of chess.

On who would have won a 1975 match between Fischer and Anatoly Karpov: I would give preference to Bobby. Bobby was stronger at that time, even without practice.

The nature of Karpov’s talent is different. Bobby is very religious in chess. He never gambles. He can see a beautiful win, but there is probably a refutation somewhere—so he never will follow this wrong conception. But Karpov was a typical gambler. The talent of Karpov is very interesting. Because he had a special art for organizing the pieces. When the pawn structure is fixed, he

starts fantastic maneuvering with the pieces. He's like a boa constrictor.

On Kasparov and computers playing chess: Garry [Kasparov] has a problem—he's almost forty. In my opinion, he is perhaps the greatest champion. What beautiful combinations! ... Kramnik spent a week at my place after winning [his match with Kasparov for the title]. He used so much energy—I said, "You need perhaps a year to recover." He said, "I think so."

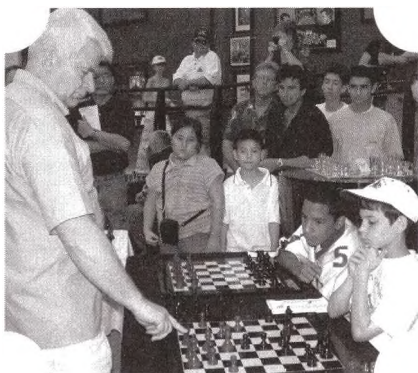
But I am getting suspicious that something is wrong with the [Kasparov-computer] matches. Something is wrong. Something is very wrong. When Garry plays against a computer, maybe he is afraid. Simply afraid. It's an enigma for me why he cannot be well prepared against the computer. Something happens with him. I would say he is pathologically frightened.

I remember when I was champion, I was afraid of children and myself. [Clarifying the joke:] I was never afraid of anybody. ... I would not be afraid of a computer. Between human world champions and a computer, somehow I still believe in humans.

On the World Chess Hall of Fame: This is the first time in my life that I was in a chess museum! I am very grateful to all of the people who made the Museum.



*"I try to live somehow a little bit underground."
Boris Spassky with his elegant wife Marina in
Miami. Shown L to R: GM Susan Polgar,
Marina Spassky, billionaire chess patron Dato
Tan Chin Nam, Boris Spassky and Dato's Wife.*



*Spassky playing a youngster in
the World Chess Hall of Fame
in Miami.*

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Chapter 9

American Chess Players Home and Abroad on 9/11

This chapter is the first piece we wrote after September 11, 2001, and everything that date means and everything it changed.

Perhaps real Evil is always mad, since sanity and the mass-murder of innocents are incompatible. Of course, Evil is a special kind of insanity—an insanity-by-design that offers no mitigation of guilt. It's not an involuntarily mental illness. To ram hijacked airliners and their passengers into buildings sheltering 50,000 office workers with photos of husbands, wives and children on their desks and desktops requires a madness that's embraced and cultivated, one achieved only after great effort to mind-meld with Evil. Whether one accepts it as a conscious force with a will of its own or as a mental construct symbolizing the worst in human existence, for the current generations Evil has a face—the flaming, crumbling Twin Towers collapsing in great plumes of dust, again and again, on CNN-replays, into the ghastly rubble-mounds of ground zero.

WORLD TRADE TOWER OBSERVATION PLATFORM HELD A UNIQUE PLACE IN CHESS HISTORY

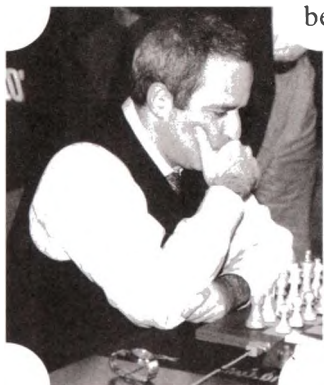
Eventually, after waves of more basic emotions and regrets had washed over your co-authors, we remembered that the World Trade Towers had been host to the first complete world championship held in the U.S., Kasparov-Anand in 1995, since Steinitz' first official match for the title in 1886 against Zukertort. The previous championship in the U.S., the final Kasparov-Karpov struggle, held in 1990 at New York City's Macklowe Hotel on 46th Street, saw only its first half take place in the U.S. The match finished in Lyon, France, with Kasparov the winner.



Vishi Anand

Actually, the Trade Center championship was one of a kind in U.S. history. Of all three world championships in the U.S., it was the only one held completely in one spot. The Steinitz-Zukertort match traveled from New York to St. Louis and New Orleans.

At the top of the World Trade Center in a September six years before the attack—Kasparov beat Anand in the third and most recent chess world championship on U.S. soil. Attorney Bob Rice, Kasparov's American agent during those times, held meetings and tournaments down the street at One Liberty Plaza, a building now endangered as a result of the earthquake-like shocks resulting from the terrorist attacks.



Garry Kasparov

Time quickly brings us back to our usual passions, chess among them.

Our game, after all, is a pursuit that takes the place of human struggle and that allows the simulation of battle pageantry, strategy and tactics—and the worst result possible is wounded pride. And beyond the military symbolism, chess is about peeling off layers of superficiality to find some subtle new truth on our board.

So we return to chess, but the context of our lives is nevertheless changed forever, like a book that survives a flood in apparently good shape until one turns a page to reveal suddenly the tell-tale of wrinkled, thickened and pasty pages.

Where were our fellow chess players on the day that changed our lives?

IN THE UPPER EAST SIDE OF MANHATTAN, CHESS WITH THE BREATH OF TRAGEDY

Co-author Lev Alburt was at home in New York City. Despite a comfortable life as a top-GM, Alburt escaped the old Soviet regime in 1979 while at a chess tournament in Germany. He quickly chose to live in the U.S. and is now a dedicated New Yorker, not completely comfortable unless he's in that city, among the throng of seemingly unlimited nationalities. Lev was at home in his upper-east-side apartment on the morning of the 11th, ready to start his day of writing and teaching chess. He turned on New York's Channel 1 to catch the weather and instead saw a picture of the first-struck tower burning. At that time, the general reaction was that the tragedy was an accident due to pilot error. There's precedent for that in the City.

On July 28, 1945, an Army Air Corps B-25 bomber, traveling in rain, fog and mist at about 200 mph and trying for a touchdown at New Jersey's Newark airport, struck the 78th and 79th story of the Empire State Building at 34th Street and Fifth Avenue, killing the pilot and his two



**GM Lev Alburt at the
U.S. CHESSathon**

crew members—and 11 people working at their desks on a Saturday. Twice that many were injured. The dead and injured worked for the National Catholic Welfare Service (now the Catholic Relief Services, who still maintains its offices on the 79th floor of the building). The impact left eyewitnesses an unforgettable image—a U.S. WWII bomber sticking half-in and half-out of the world's most recognizable building. Elevator chains were severed, sending passengers plummeting. One engine of the plane jarred loose and rammed through the skyscraper to land on the roof of a different building. Eventually, The Empire State Building was repaired and improved. It remains a NYC stalwart.

But as Lev watched a second airliner crash into the remaining tower, it was instantly clear that the disaster was intentional. A hundred blocks from the World Trade Center, Alburt wasn't immediately affected—he continued to view the catastrophe as millions did from Toledo, Trieste and Tokyo—on television. Later in the day, food marts were a bit more crowded than normal. Alburt bought a few extra bottles of water. Still later, he learned that his cousin, who drives to work from Brooklyn to New Jersey, had been trapped the evening of September 11 on the west side of the Hudson, unable to cross a bridge or use a tunnel that would bring him back into New York City and home to his own bed. Hotels were jammed; he slept in his car.

But in Lev's uptown Manhattan, life seemed normal. Then, three days later, a neighbor came to get Alburt because something was burning in the neighborhood. It was a few minutes before they understood that the wind had changed to come from the



**LAWRENCE, AS THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE NEW WORLD CHESS
HALL OF FAME & SIDNEY
SAMOLE MUSEUM, WAS ON HIS WAY
TO THE SEASIDE RESORT TOWN OF
KALITHEA, GREECE ...**

south—that what seemed nearby smoldering was the smoke from the far end of Manhattan. Chess work went on, accompanied by the very breath of the tragedy.

THE OLD WORLD

Al Lawrence, who normally lives an hour's drive from midtown, was in Europe during the attacks. Before the “new war” and the new, post-Tower-collapse world, Lawrence, as the Executive Director of the new World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum, was on his way to the seaside resort town of Kalithea, Greece, to make a presentation to the FIDE executive committee meeting being held there on September 8th and 9th. Since this is not an Olympiad year, when the meetings are held in conjunction with the worldwide competition, the meeting drew delegates from approximately 60 countries. Lawrence's project update on the World Hall of Fame was very well received by the World Chess Federation's delegates and staff. After all, the Hall is the most exciting new chess project in many years, a real museum for chess in a striking building in a center for tourism and a city easily accessible by most of the world, Miami.

The FIDE meeting was organized by FIDE Deputy President Georgios Makropoulos (also president of the Greece Chess Federation). At the meetings, he sat on the left of President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov at the head table. On Ilyumzhinov's right sat Honorary President Florencio Campomanes, looking much like a diminutive Caesar Romero.

Despite all the presidents and near-presidents at the table, FIDE Executive Director Emanuel Omuku chaired the meeting, a difference between FIDE and USCF, where the president chairs.

Various vice presidents and zonal presidents were at the meeting. Interested spectators, including many FIDE national federation delegates, were in the audience and given the opportunity to speak. Three USCFers attended: Steve Doyle, Executive Vice President of FIDE; Jim Eade, the U.S. Zonal President; and William Kelleher, USCF's FIDE representative.

FIDE'S DOCTOR BILL

The meeting venue and even the organization was new for Lawrence but the issues seemed *deja vu* to the USCF veterans. For example, there was the matter of Dr. Stephen Press, VP of FIDE's Medical Commission, the FIDE representative who addressed the U.S. Chess Federation's Annual Convention in August, speaking on behalf of "antidoping"—the drug testing of chess players. It seems Dr. Press had run up a \$200,000 travel and expense bill on similar missions. To put this in perspective—it's 10% of FIDE's annual budget! FIDE officials were distraught over the expense and made sure it wouldn't be repeated.

In a private moment, driving Campo and FIDE ratings director Casto Abundo between the meeting hall and their hotel, Lawrence recounted how Dr. Press, an Englewood, N.J., chiropractor, told the delegates in his August address that if USCF didn't acquiesce to drug-testing of chess players, FIDE might replace USCF as the national federation for the U.S. The normally poker-faced Campo winced visibly in the passenger's position, while Abundo groaned from the backseat. It appeared to Lawrence that Press had been freelancing. Dr. Press has his own website, www.sport-dc.com, where you can check out his significant credentials (as well as his "free examination" special web offer).

A REAL TOP-50 GM OR RATING-RICH ON PAPER ONLY?

Another familiar issue was the case of GM Alexandru Crisan of Romania, rated number 49 in FIDE, with an Elo of 2635. Crisan is a wealthy businessman who's become president of the Romanian national federation. FIDE had received charges that rating reports, showing his recent outstanding performances against less than top-tier players, had been doctored. Before its conference, FIDE had taken the step of requiring Crisan to take part in two tournaments against strong players. Crisan played in only one, with a terrible result.

The discussion was animated, with Makropoulos, from the head table, taking on the role of chief prosecutor. Campomanes spoke

for moderation. Ilyumzhinov proposed a match between Crisan and Makropoulos, with the winner making (or in Crisan's case, keeping) the GM title. But Makropoulos, a strong player, was adamant, saying that neither he nor Crisan deserved that title. Crisan was allowed to speak lengthily, and the issue was debated on and off in a democratic way for several days. In the end, the body followed the recommendation of its Rules Commission, who reportedly had studied “hundreds of documents.” The judgment was harsh. Crisan stands to lose his GM title, and even his IM status.

After the meetings, FIDE held a special, though informal, session, in which the draft meeting notes were distributed and corrections made. This is an intriguing procedure, leading to better minutes and better understanding of their meaning. It's a step that USCF could have benefited from at times. It's true that about half of the delegates had left, but still a healthy group parsed the proceedings.

WORLD YOUTH

Held concomitantly with the FIDE Congress was the World Youth Championships. Lawrence followed the FIDE officials to a nearby hotel where the award ceremony took place. Hundreds sat in front of a huge outdoor stage, applauding each winner. As always, kids were chess' best advertisement. Cameras snapped throughout the hour-long ceremony, during which FIDE officials took turns handing out trophies and medals.

TRAVELING ON SEPTEMBER 11

After the FIDE conference ended, Lawrence drove to Thessalonica, Greece, to fly on to the Euwe Centrum (a library dedicated to world champion Max Euwe) in Amsterdam. Thessalonica is home to a beautiful central square that ends in an azure sea, and it seemed much of the city was out on what the Spanish would call the evening *paseo*. Lawrence had met a German couple who was traveling to Crete, having given them a

ride from the airport to the city, and the three were taking in the sites and foods. An oddity of the tour was finding ourselves in the middle of a genuine communist rally, complete with rousing, militaristic music and an abundant red banner, highlighting a gold hammer-and-sickle, with the sea as a backdrop. The event turned out to be a protest against NATO. Lawrence remembers chuckling about the demise of the boogie-man of his “duck-and-cover” childhood, indeed of most of his life, laughing that it was hard to find a good communist rally anymore. Unknown to him, the World Trade Center had already fallen, victim to a new enemy, not so tidily contained within national boundaries.

Hotels were scarce and it was nearly midnight when Lawrence found a vacancy for a quick rest before a 6 AM flight. At the desk, the young woman tried to tell him about New York while she imprinted his American Express card. “Trade Towers fell down!” she said. Lawrence was curious, but he hardly took her words literally. Then, checked into a room with CNN on view, within minutes he was watching the famous replay. He spent the short night on the telephone, calling his wife and trying to call friends in Manhattan. Dazed, he caught his early morning flight, which took off and arrived on time, with no noticeable extra security or nervousness at either the Thessalonica or Amsterdam airport.

THE EUWE CREW

That afternoon Lawrence had carted his laptop and connecting projector—the same tools he had used at the FIDE conference—to the Euwe Centrum in the heart of Amsterdam. (“Euwe,” despite



**AN ODDITY OF THE TOUR
WAS FINDING OURSELVES IN
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AND AN ABUNDANT RED BANNER ...**

our subhead, nearly rhymes with “Minerva.” The “w” makes a “v” sound, and the final “e” is pronounced as a schwa.) The meeting had been set up weeks in advance by GM Hans Ree, a former champion of Holland and the most popular chess columnist in the country. (He’s also author of the popular monthly ChessCafe.com column *Dutch Treat*.)

The idea of making a presentation seemed surrealistic to Lawrence, given the tragedy at home, but he told himself that everyone’s best efforts need to go on. A cultural mission seemed particularly important in the context. Anyway, the talk was really aimed at informing the staff of the long-standing site about the new Hall of Fame across the Atlantic and opening the topic of exchanges of information and artifacts. The staff began with polite condolences about the attacks—as an American in Europe at this time, Lawrence never got used to receiving condolences, but understood their good intent.

HERREN GRACHT 341: AN AMERICAN P-DP IN AMSTERDAM

Lawrence was scheduled to fly out the morning of the next day, September 13, but all international flights to the U.S. had been canceled without rescheduling. During the world wars, civilian victims in Europe who became stranded in cities foreign to them were known as DPs—displaced persons. Many of these victims of their times were put up in makeshift camps until a sponsoring country could be found. Some DPs had to walk hundreds of miles to a home that may have not existed any more.

“Stuck” in the beautiful canal-city of Amsterdam, Lawrence was technically “displaced.” (He certainly felt the powerful urge to be home at such a time.) But the worst “hardship” he faced was a lack of hotel rooms (it was the weekend of Amsterdam’s largest annual convention, for broadcasters). Actually, this problem led to anxiety only. Fortunately, the hotel Ree had recommended for Lawrence, the Ambassade Hotel at Herren Gracht (“Gracht” in the address means it’s on a canal) 341, catered to Americans. So

each morning the hotel would receive cancellations, naturally, and he was safe-havened for another day. In fact, the worst “deprivation” was, ironically, having to upgrade to a small suite one evening because it was the only room available. He coined a term for himself, “P-DP”—pampered DP.

Rightly so. The staff at the Ambassade appeared to be out of some over-promising American commercial—gracious, attentive, ever helpful and particularly kind to the stranded Americans. If you find yourself going to Amsterdam, stay at the Ambassade, in the most walkable, beautiful section of Amsterdam. (Their website, complete with pictures of the charming property, is www.ambassade-hotel.nl. Reservations can be made online, and they get a prompt response.)

IT REALLY IS GREAT TO BE A CHESS PLAYER

There is a brotherhood of chess. And GM Hans Ree and his wife Lien made that clear. (By the way, they both write for the same newspaper, he on chess and she on art.) They invited Lawrence over for a wonderful dinner that ended, of course, in speed games.

Another day, Hans met Lawrence at this hotel and they walked to the Schak Café, where any visiting chess player should go. It's just across the canal from the famous house of Anne Frank.

COMING HOME—THE KNIGHT'S TOUR

Of course, all the Americans Lawrence ran into throughout the city could only talk of getting home, and how they were spending hours each day calling all the airlines. Lawrence got lucky; he found a way home, on a different airline, but one that would accept his ticket, on the 17th. Sure, the flight went from Amsterdam to Zurich to Dallas to Newark, taking 20 hours, but the important thing was to get to the States. He'd heard that 30,000 Americans had been stranded flying into Canada, before its airports were closed.

Once he hit Zurich, Lawrence got another break by wading into

a line that from its length should have yielded World Series tickets, and virtually did. He got a flight straight to Long Island's JFK. With dispensation in hand, he headed for the long line at the left. Airport security had now been seriously beefed up. An indefatigable team of smartly uniformed inspectors was well organized for a manual search of any baggage revealed by X-ray to contain suspicious outlines. Long tables stretched out in straight lines, end-to-end to serve as inspection platforms. We could set up a simul, Lawrence caught himself thinking.

A SHARPER IMAGE CHURCH BAZAAR

His suit-carry-on held only clothes and aroused no interest, but his roll-on computer bag, filled with wires and circuitry, got a complete, item-by-item check. A courteous and friendly young blond man with crisp English asked him to unpack. "You seem to have quite a lot of gizmos in this one, sir. Please be so kind as to open it for me, one compartment at a time." The line of tables, dressed with white cloths like a state championship at the Holiday Inn, laden with everyone's electronics, took on a look of a Sharper Image church basement bazaar—all that was needed were the hand-printed price tags and homemade cookies.

THE RAZOR'S DOUBLE-EDGE

Packed tight with electronics, many of its double-zippered pockets looped together with small combination locks, the bag surrendered its warren of widgets one by one. As each "gizmo" case was unzipped to reveal a new piece of electronic equipment, the inspector's older colleague would appear from other points of the line to wave an instrument over each component, looking, except for his ears, like Star Trek's Spock using his trusty tri-corder. The second man would then walk his device over to a larger station, where whatever data the tri-corder had picked up was analyzed.

All this was done with Swiss precision and logic, so the search took only a few minutes. All was *gut* until Lawrence's little zippered bag stuffed with travel-sized toiletries gave up its secrets. Both men frowned at a plastic, double-bladed disposable razor.

No whizzing tri-corder was necessary. “I’m sorry,” the younger one said, picking up the dark blue plastic finger like it was a thousand-year-old talisman being smuggled out of Egypt, “this has been banned on the flights.” He continued to hold it, almost at arm’s length. “We can package it in a small yellow envelope and put it in the baggage compartment for you, or destroy it.”

“Destroy it,” Lawrence said, using the guard’s word choice to be *klar*. But he felt like they were discussing the fate of a mad dog, not a razor. He barely stopped himself from adding, “It’s of no consequence, *ja*?” As a baby boomer, he’d evidently suffered linguistic damage from a thousand bad movie screenplays of spies bluffing their way through tight spots in the scripts.

Spock moved suddenly up the line in answer to a request for his tri-corder. His young colleague slipped the contraband Gillette back into its niche with Lawrence’s toothbrush, closing the zipper. “He’s gone now. Some of this is crazy.”

Although the razor’s value was trifling, Lawrence was grateful for the unexpected display of sense-of-exception amidst the ruthless organization of procedures. After all, what could he have done with the whisker-cutting contraband— threaten to swipe off the unwanted facial hair of a stewardess if his coffee wasn’t hot?

On the plane, the new rules showed more signs of haste. At mealtime, the knives were deli plastic, but the forks were metal, with sharp prongs. And in the washrooms, for our convenience— double-bladed disposable razors, colleagues of Al’s nearly destroyed bladed depilatory.

None of these notes are meant to be snide. The times are strange, not the concerns of the people scrambling to codify and implement new rules of the road at 35,000 feet. In fact, both passengers and airline professionals of all nationalities behaved well in this crazy time of fear and horror—and the petty disturbances of unsure bookings, long lines and sleepless nights in foreign airports. But it was a relief to land in New York, where Lawrence rented a car from a Hertz so crowded with unwanted vehicles that

it required a tortuous route just to get off the lot.

WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME FESTIVITIES POSTPONED UNTIL DECEMBER 16-17

Once back, it didn't take long for Lawrence to hear from people who didn't want to get into an airplane for a while. As a result, the World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum delayed its Grand Opening festivities until December 16th and 17th.

No one likes the idea of letting madmen dictate our schedules. Indeed, the Museum itself opened two days earlier than scheduled. But the grand opening, with its historic festivities, waited—out of deference to travelers. By December 16 we had to be ready to celebrate our lives and the important legacy of a worldwide culture with a renewed and reinvigorated fervor.



*Left to Right: David Jarrett, Florencio Campomanes and
Harold Winston at the delayed Hall of Fame festivities*



*GM Hans Ree before a game of blitz
with co-author Lawrence in Amsterdam
after the Trade Center attack.*



FIDE President Ilyumzhinov with one of the youngest World Youth winners. These days, kids tend to look and dress the same wherever they're from. Dozens of young champs charmed the crowd with enthusiasm and big smiles.



Romanian FIDE delegate Margareta Muresan (right) vociferously defends Alexandru Crisan to FIDE VP Steve Doyle (off camera).



Chess patron Dato Tan Chin Nai in his office in Kuala Lumpur

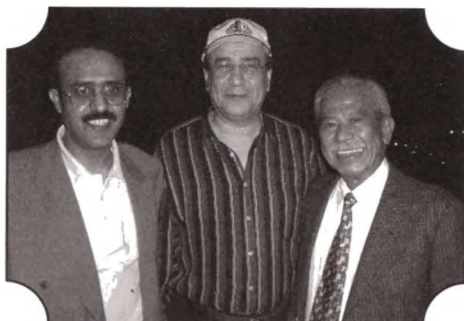


These days it's hard to find a good communist rally. But Lawrence happened on one in Thessalonica on 9/11.

At the Euwe Centrum in Amsterdam: (from left to right) Ton Sibbing, Corten Woude (both staffers) Errit Petersma (Chairman of the board) and GM Hans Ree.



Anneke at the desk of the Ambassade—one of a staff who define gracious hospitality. She even wrote a personal note saying how much she regretted the attacks.

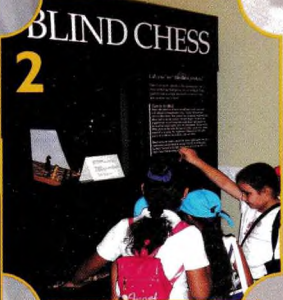


FIDE Honorary President Florencio Campomanes (right), with two of the delegates to the World Chess Federation Congress. (Notice the World Chess Hall of Fame cap.)

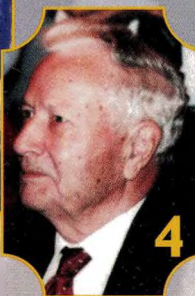


1. At the Hall of Fame grand opening—the descendants of Capablanca are special guests.

2. Children experience what it's like to play chess without being able to see.



3. GM Bill Lombardy (standing) with Hall-of-Famer Jack Collins and his sister Ethel.

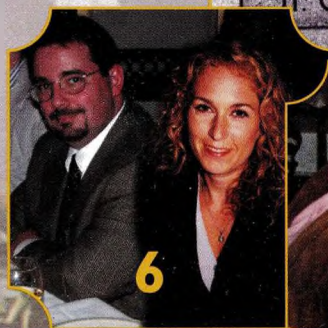


4. The American Arpad Elo, after whom the world's chess rating system is named.



5. Commemorative bricks name the Hall's charter members.

6. Shane Samole and his wife, Susan, at the 2001 USCF delegate's convention in Framingham, Massachusetts.



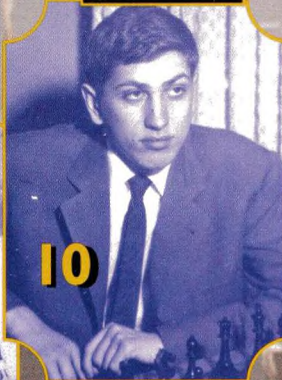
7. ChessCafe owner Hanon Russell and his wife Nancy.



8. Former USCF president Tim Redman with World Chess Federation president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov.

9. Former world champ Max Euwe (left) and Hall-of-Famer George Koltanowski.

10. Bobby Fischer, who hasn't contested an official game since 1972, is still the best known chess player.





1. Lev Alburt, shortly after winning the U.S. Championship in 1984, in the Park-Avenue home of Olga Capablanca Clark, the widow of Jose Raúl Capablanca. A portrait capturing the beauty of her youth is in the background. (Olga's third and final husband was the famous WWII admiral, J.J. Clark. In fact, in 1979, she christened the USS Clark.) 2. Sidney Samole with son Shane and grandchildren Dylan (left) and Brooke.



3. Al Lawrence with Capablanca's granddaughter Gloria, in front of her grandfather's display at the World Chess Hall of Fame in Miami.



Lev Alburt
(1945-)

Alburt is famed as a grandmaster of both chess and chess teaching. A three-time US champion (1984, 1985, 1990), he also won, among other titles, the European Cup (1976, 1979) and the US Open (1987, 1989). Raised in Odessa, Ukraine, he escaped the old Soviet Union in 1979 and moved to New York City. Alburt now devotes his chess life to teaching, writing and publishing. *The Comprehensive Chess Course*, which he co-authored and published, is an all-time bestseller.



4. Alburt and wife Lana with Dustin Diamond (formerly "Screech" on the television series *Saved by the Bell*).
5. Alburt's Hall of Fame plaque.



6. Lawrence with Hall-of-Famer Arnold Denker.



7. Daphne Lawrence in the traditional Malaysian baju kelawa Al brought back from his visit to chess patron Dato Tan Chin Nam.



8. Journalist and former U.S. champ Yasser Seirawan interviews Alburt.

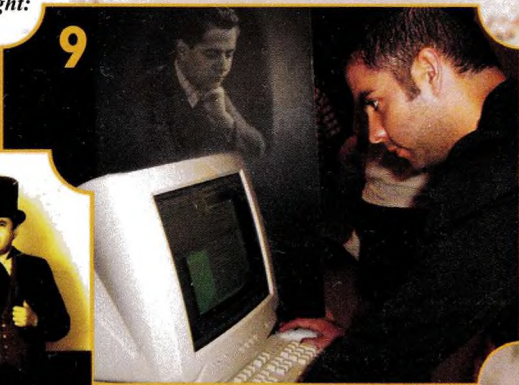


9. Capablanca's grandnephew Fernando checks out the computer kiosks at the Hall of Fame.

10. U.S. International Master Kamran Shirazi chooses buckskin while Alburt dons the trappings of the bourgeoisie for a photo portrait at a U.S. championship.



11. Cold War press conference, left to right: Alburt, Congressman Jim Courter from New Jersey, Congressman Jack Kemp from New York, and Professor Ed Lozansky at a press conference on the plight of chess player and famous Soviet "refusenik" Boris Gulko. (Gulko later emigrated to the U.S. and became U.S. champion.)



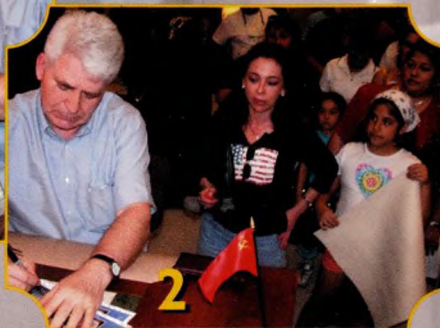
12. Alburt's last-round win over Sergey Kudrin, securing Lev the title at the 1989 U.S. Open in Chicago.





1. GM Susan Polgar, Lawrence, Shane Samole and Spassky at Bobby Fischer's custom-made table at the Hall of Fame.

2. Spassky signing autographs for the crowd at his induction weekend.



3. Paul Truong, Vietnam champion who as a child made a harrowing escape to the U.S.

4. Then-USCF president GM Max Dlugy, Lawrence and world champ Garry Kasparov at the U.S. Open in Los Angeles.



5. Former Chess Life editor and raconteur Fairfield Hoban, Lawrence, Luis Hoyos Milan-Bernardo and Gary Colvin celebrate a victorious moment at the U.S. Amateur Team Championship in 1990. (In 1977, Colvin and Lawrence met in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 2003, Colvin has the office down the hall from Al in Miami!)



6. Susan Polgar mows down challengers at the Hall of Fame.

7. The "Time Tunnel" entryway to the Museum.

8. GM Alexandra Kosteniuk is at home on the model's runway, behind the movie camera—and giving simuls.



9. An historic event—
(left to right) Alburt,
Arthur Bisguier, Samuel
Reshevsky, former world
champion Mikhail
Botvinnik, Neil McKelvie,
Bruce Pandolfini
(standing) and Stanley
Grayson at the Manhattan
Chess Club in 1983 during
Botvinnik's visit to the
U.S. The Soviet hero was
unafraid of having his
photo taken with defector
Alburt, despite the "wall" still
being up between East and West.



10



10. Former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.
Jeane Kirkpatrick with Alburt
at a 1988 reception in New York City.

11. Woody Harris of Virginia examines
the famous "Morphy Silver," presented to
Paul Morphy for becoming U.S. Champion.
Morphy was Spassky's hero
and is considered by many to be
the greatest player of all time.



11

12. Andy Stathopoulos, Vice President of
Operations, and Sheri Nuñez, Executive
Assistant to the President—both of
Excalibur Electronics—help out
during the grand opening of the Hall.



12

13. At night, the World Chess Hall of Fame
is lit up to be admired by those passing on
the Florida Turnpike.



13





1. At the 2003 Hall of Fame induction of Spassky, Walter Browne, Donald Byrne and Alburt: (Left to right) Lawrence, GM Sam Palatnik, Alburt, woman's champion Susan Polgar (never defeated for the title), Spassky, Kosteniuk (who narrowly missed the woman's crown), Browne, then-USCF ED Frank Niro and U.S. Chess Trust Chairman Winston.

2. U.S. Chess Federation then-president McCrery (left) and chess mega-sponsor and president of Excalibur Electronics Shane Samole receive awards from Niro (right) for their work in starting the World Chess Hall of Fame & Sidney Samole Museum in Miami.



3. World's top human player Kasparov watches World Chess Federation president Ilyumzhinov make Garry's first move in his match against top chess software program Deep Junior. The match was a disappointing draw.



4. Gwen and Frank (House of Staunton) Camaratta.



5. Old rivals at it again—even after five championship matches, they still slug it out: Anatoly Karpov (left) starts Kasparov's clock at a "quick chess" match in New York City in 2002. This time, Karpov won.



6. Kenneth Harkness was co-inventor of the rating system used around the world, named after Elo. But instead of the ELO system, Lawrence maintains it should be called the HELO system, noting Harkness' spade work.



7. Floyd and Bernice Sarisohn, through Chess Collectors' International (along with Camaratta), have made the display of chess sets at the World Chess Hall of Fame an important exhibit.



8. Edmar Mednis in his prime. Hall-of-Famer Mednis seemed in great vigor at the 2001 grand opening. But, sadly, he died in 2002.



8

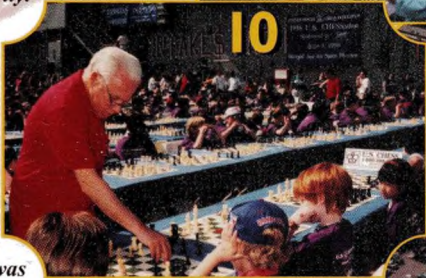
9. The USCF's National Elementary Championships attract thousands of chess-playing youngsters each year.



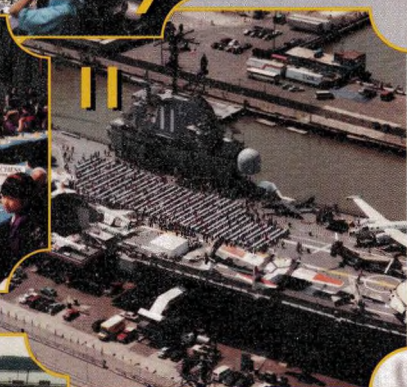
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10-12. Helicopter and on-deck photos of the U.S. CHESSathon on the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid at the pier at New York City.

The event pitted a thousand youngsters against the best players in the world. For six years while Lawrence was executive director of USCF, it was the largest children's chess-for-charity event. In photo 10, Bisguier takes on his share of the CHESSathon youngsters.



10



11



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13. The 2001 Hall of Fame grand opening: Lawrence, Alburt, Hall-of-Famers Denker and Bisguier, inductee Lubosh Kavalek, Hall-of-Famers Mednis and Robert Byrne, and Niro.

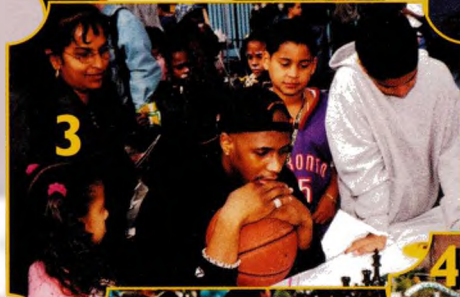


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1. Albur gives a simul at the Hall of Fame.

2. Kids on a field trip in front of the wall of fame.



3-5. Kids and celebrities at the Police Athletic League Building in Harlem at the annual 2002 Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF) Chess Festival with GM Maurice Ashley.

Clockwise, from top left—3. NY Knicks player Lavar Postel pondering a move. 4. Postel and Ashley in a live demo game. 5. Michael Gladis (from the film K-11 WidowMaker) signing autographs.



6. In 1999, school children of all ages attended USCF's "Supernational" in Knoxville, Tennessee.

7. In 2000, at the World School Chess Championships award ceremonies in New York City, Sting (the musician) studies the board while Kasparov moves against another opponent.

8. The 2001 grand opening ribbon cutting ceremony (from left to right): Front row—Sharon Samole, Diamond, Shane Samole, Larcenia Bullard, State Representative Edward Bullard, Denker and Miami Chamber of Commerce president Ramiro Ortiz. Back row—Myron Samole, Lawrence, Dato Tan, John McCrary, Valentina Jarrett, Harold Winston and Florencio Campomanes.



Chapter 10

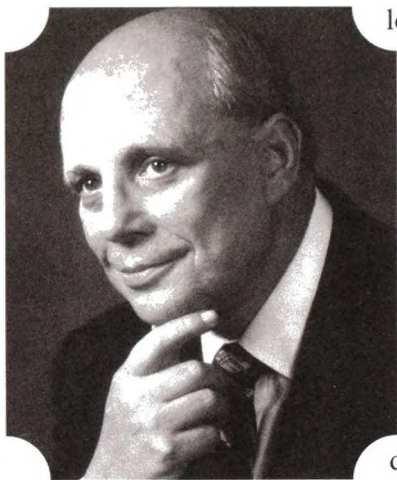
“How About a Nice Game of Chess?”—Any Time

Sidney Samole (1935-2000)

Here’s one of those personality-profile questions for you. Which would you rather do: give everyone in the world a friend on call, or be chess world champion? Let’s not embarrass one another—we’ll keep our answers private. But suppose you couldn’t be the world champion.

If you could give everyone in the world a tireless, faithful, uncomplaining companion who shared your special interest, you’d expect to be enormously famous and universally praised—at least weekly on CNN—, right? If you eventually made these Man-Fridays speak English (or Spanish if you play *ajedrez*, or German if you play *Schach*, or French if you play *echecs*) and even move their own pieces, like a good little partner, you’d say you worked a miracle and deserved the Nobel Peace (well at least “Piece”) Prize. And if you then improved your Robbinses so that they could be adjusted to play just a little bit worse than their human masters, could you be denied statues in the Smithsonian?

Well, you probably didn’t even know the name of the chess Prometheus who brought the warm flame of a chess game to any



*Sidney Samole, 1935-2000, the man
who made sure you always
had a chess opponent*

lonesome player on a rainy mid-
night. But chances are Sid
Samole (Sa-MOLE-ee), whose
passing on July 30th, 2000, is
much mourned by his family
and his many friends, touched
your life. He may even have
spoken to you, after a fashion.
“How about a nice game of
chess?” his sorcerer’s appren-
tice might have asked.

Sid was the man who
dreamed, patented and produced
the first commercial chess com-
puter. And the fact is he was a
world chess champion, many

times over. He wasn’t a tournament chess player, although he
played a tough and shrewd game. But he holds—through his
computers—perhaps more world and national titles than anyone
else.

At this point, we have to make a theoretical aside—as chess
players, we’re used to that. Here’s the conundrum—does an
inventor get credit for the accomplishments of his creations? Dr.
Frankenstein got the fictional blame. Shouldn’t someone who
actually succeeded in creating that perfect partner and assistant
get the credit? We knew you’d agree.

By the way, don’t confuse Sidney Samole with the people who
screwed up the Royal Game royally by momentarily psyching out
Garry Kasparov so that every non-chessplayer in the world now
thinks that computers play better than people. (Actually, such
“weakies,” as Bobby Fischer called non-tournament players—or
non-players, since they were all the same to him, that is, beneath
contempt—always thought computers were king. Even ‘way back
in the days of those chip-challenged tabletop models of the late
1970s that barely knew outposts from outlets, *hoi polloi* thought

computers were invincible. We “real” players laughed derisively—for just a few years, until Sid made his minions so incredibly strong so incredibly fast.) The people who brought you Deep Thought, remember, constructed a huge, supercomputing mainframe, so big that it had to stay in one spot and telephone Garry to make a move. Then, after the last match, it got an unlisted number, humming, gloating and thanking its lucky algorithms. But here’s the segue—Sid (in the form of one of his highly portable chess portmanteaus) actually drew Deep Thought in 1988 to win the overall Association for Computing Machinery—then the Big Kahuna of computer chess championships.

Here’s a partial list of Sidney Samole’s championships.

**Sidney Samole’s
World & National Chess Championship Titles**

- 1980: • Wins First World MicroComputer Championship in London, England**
- 1981: • Wins Second World MicroComputer Championship in Travemunde, Germany**
- 1983: • Wins Third World MicroComputer Championship in Budapest, Hungary**
- 1984: • Wins Fourth World MicroComputer Championship in Glasgow, Scotland**
 - Wins First Canadian Main Frame Computer Championship in Montreal**
- 1985: • Wins First U.S. Computer Championship in Mobile, Alabama**
- 1986: • Wins Second U.S. Computer Championship in Mobile, Alabama**
- 1987: • Wins Third U.S. Computer Championship in Mobile, Alabama**
- 1988: • Wins Fourth U.S. Computer Championship in Mobile, Alabama**
 - Ties for first at the ACM Championship by drawing Deep Thought**

THE WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME AND SIDNEY SAMOLE MUSEUM

Sid’s last act for chess constitutes probably the most thoughtfully planned chess endowment of all time, providing for the most impressive building dedicated to chess in the world. It’s the new,

**HERE'S THE
CONUNDRUM—DOES AN
INVENTOR GET CREDIT FOR
THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF
HIS CREATIONS?**

official home for the World Chess Hall of Fame (yes, it has FIDE's official imprimatur and incorporates the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame as well). Sid and his business-partner son Shane worked tirelessly with architects to make the museum a traffic-stopper—and purchased a location where there was plenty of traffic to stop.

The museum is located at 13755 SW 119th Avenue in Miami. This happens to be right beside the Florida Turnpike, where hundreds of thousands of cars pass by the building each day. To make sure he attracted enough attention and made a statement for chess at the same time, Sidney had the building's exterior designed as a muted chessboard. And the building's entryway? A forty-five-foot-tall "Castle." A rook, of course. (Co-author Al Lawrence teased Sidney once about how people might say that his building was a "rook." Al's friend of more than two decades smiled at him the way Sidney always did when he knew Al was funny but wrong. "They'll say 'castle'," he said quietly. In Miami for Sid's funeral, Al wanted to see the Samole Museum again. He got a little lost and asked the locals at a Latino-dominated service station for directions to the chess building. "Donde esta el museo de ajedrez, por favor?" Al ventured. "Oh," they smiled. "You mean that new castle building?")

WHERE NO MAN HAD GONE BEFORE

How the first commercial chess-playing computer came into being is, in addition to being Sid's story, a science-fiction tale, and a story of enterprise—actually, the Enterprise. You probably recall that the name of this stalwart WWII aircraft carrier was co-opted and flashed around the TV universe at "warp speed," as the beloved spacecraft of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock (the original,

cheapo-production-generation). They were the sci-fi swashbucklers who saved the universe each week on cue, during the years of tumultuously changing values between September 1966 and June 1969, a time when Americans particularly needed to feel such optimism.

Largely as a result of his role in the tale of the chess-playing microcomputer's "going where no one has gone before," Sid became a multi-millionaire entrepreneur. Throughout his life he remained straightforward and self-deprecating about his success.

"The last real job I held working for someone else without trying to take over his company was when I was 16, slicing corned beef in a deli because the pay included all you could eat. I had an insatiable appetite as a kid.

"It's true I'm an entrepreneur, and that I'm pretty successful. That translates into more than 20 years of failures, one after the other, until finally I put one over the top. I've been broke many times, but I was never poor."

TIMING IS EVERYTHING— EVEN IN THE 24TH CENTURY

During the nearly three years that Captain Kirk and Spock made their maiden TV voyages, Sid had been in Canada and Hawaii. There he was so busy as president of a franchise for Beltone Hearing Aids in Toronto and Montreal, and then as a partner of a non-franchise hearing aid retailing corporation in Honolulu, that he didn't even bother owning a television, since he had no time to watch it.

So the first time Sid saw Star Trek was in its reruns in 1976, at a moment when technology was just far enough advanced, with Intel's 8080 microprocessor and a brand-new component called ROM (the now familiar Read-Only Memory), to make a chess-playing micro-computer conceivable.



*Sharon and Sid Samole in 1990
at the Lawrence's wedding.*



**MY SECRETARY SAID
THAT HER BOYFRIEND,
THEN AN ENGINEER WITH
ZENITH RADIO, COULD
BUILD A CHESS-PLAYING
COMPUTER. I TOLD HER
TO ASK HIM TO GIVE ME A CALL.**

Additionally, it was at a time when Sid owned and operated Fidelity Electronics, a hearing aid manufacturing firm Sid had built up with contracts from the Veterans' Administration. Among its other cutting-edge technology, his firm produced high-tech, bio-medical products, such as "myo-electric" hands, prostheses that could actually be controlled by the brain impulses of amputees.

A few Sidney Samole firsts:

- 1977: • Patented first commercial computer chess game**
- 1986: • Awarded first 2100 USCF-certified rating for a commercial computer**
 - First win by a commercial computer against an International Master (USCF 2553) at the U.S. Open in Somerset, New Jersey**
- 1988: • Produced first commercial MicroComputer to be awarded a USCF Master rating (2325)**

Herein lies one of those delightful and mysterious historical connections. The very first, and most famous, chess "automaton," first exhibited in 1769, was called the "Turk." Probably one of the pioneering cabinet illusions—the type of magic-trick used over the following centuries to saw a lovely assistant in half or make a caged lion disappear—the "Turk" held within it a strong chess player who manipulated the apparatus to defeat the stunned and spooked public. It's easy for your co-authors to think of Sidney Samole in something of the same way—a little bit of him in each of his 20th-Century "automatons." But the connection goes

beyond low- versus high-tech and metaphor. The “Turk” incorporated one of the first artificial models of a working hand and arm. This apparatus actually contributed importantly to the development of the field of prosthetics!

Here’s Sid in his own words on the moment of inspiration that was to produce such an enormous boon to chess around the world, and at the same time was to make him a very wealthy man:

“Fidelity was doing about two and a half million dollars annually in sales when, watching an episode of Star Trek, I saw Spock playing chess against the ship’s computer. I was fascinated. What a great idea!”

“I like to play chess, but could never find someone to play with—certainly not when I was available, with my crazy work schedule.

“The following morning, I was telling my secretary about the program. She said that her boyfriend, then an engineer with Zenith Radio, could build a chess-playing computer. I told her to ask him to give me a call.

“We talked, and within a few months, he delivered a working bread-board. (A bread-board is a working model of an electronic product laid out on a board with lots of holes in it, allowing the engineer to add and subtract components.) It didn’t play very well, but it did make legal moves.”

The engineer wanted \$25,000 for his work. Sid always hated up-front costs. Instead, he negotiated a deal that gave the engineer a 1% royalty on the new invention. Over the years, that agreement cost Fidelity Electronics more than a million dollars. Characteristically, Sidney loved to tell this story and laugh at himself.

Sid’s patent was tied to a keyboard entry system that let the computer know the moves being made against it. Sidney didn’t at

that moment anticipate sensory input, in which a player presses the chessboard squares to give the computer this information. After a few years, once sensory input was designed, Sid's patent was worthless, and other companies could manufacture and sell chess computers. This probably kept Sid from piling up 100 million dollars. Many lesser men would have been greedy and bitter. But Samole often poked fun at himself about his limited patent. Sid's self-deprecating humor won over many who would have otherwise been jealous and held his success against him.

Under Sid's guidance, Fidelity made one model, out of wood. Even though Sid hadn't read any chess books, he came to the same conclusion that serious players had come to over the centuries.

"I decided we had to use coordinates of letters and numbers to operate the keyboard. But instead of using what later I discovered was algebraic notation, I insisted on reversing it, using letters up and down the board and numbers from left to right. After all, who ever heard of apartment E2? It's always 2E! So when the first models came out, they were both amazing and amusing to the chess world!"

Be sure to see the Museum's exhibit of the Chess Challenger, the first commercial chess computer. It quite literally changed the history of how we play and study chess. On it you can still see Sid's logical but mistaken idea of how to label the ranks and files—an idea that did not change the history of chess notation. No one talks about winning by attacking on the "8-file."

MAKING THE RIGHT MOVES

After building three working models and four non-working models, Sid decided to promote his new brainchild at Chicago's Consumer Electronics Show in January 1977. Another man would have taken years to bring the product to market, but Sidney had done it in months. It was clear that Sid's, and his chess computer's, time had come. This trade show was famous for using glitzy, high-tech pizzazz to court and cater to buyers—those jaded

and hard-to-impress rulers of retail. But Sid, who had learned to be cautious about overhead, rented a small booth, just four feet wide, setting up simple tables so that he and his salesmen could demonstrate his Chess Challenger to anyone who happened to be interested.

“Standing like good salespeople, we bent over the tables at nine in the morning and didn’t straighten up until the day’s final bell. All day long we were actually tossing orders over our shoulders, not taking time to file them or even to put them in a box till closing time. That day we sold Sears, Montgomery Wards, Neiman Marcus, and what seemed like everyone else in the retail business. That experience taught me that you didn’t have to be a great salesman if you had a truly innovative product!”

Sid was modest. Under his both imaginative and careful management, Fidelity prospered. Chess computers were hot, and Sid’s keyboard-entry models held the field for a time. He went on to produce computerized bridge, checkers, and Othello. He designed and manufactured computerized gin and cribbage, as well as other card games. Fidelity manufactured all its games in the U.S. Sid took his company from two and a half million dollars in annual sales in 1976 to five million in 1977. Then Fidelity doubled its sales to 10 million in 1978. It soared to 27 million in 1979, and to an astonishing 40 million in 1980.

Fidelity could afford and profit from serious national advertising. That seemed right. After all, the idea for his flagship product had come to Sid while watching TV.

In fact, 1979 saw Sid, normally a firm believer in containing costs, spend \$125,000, not including the cost of production, to put a 30-second commercial spot on the popular Sunday evening news show *60 Minutes*. The spot featured a then-amazing talking chess computer that spoke to its opponent during the game. On that special night, while on business in New York City, Sid was staying at the Park Plaza Hotel on 59th Street across from Central

Park. He made sure to be in his room, in front of the television. As anyone would, he was having second thoughts. *Thirty seconds—for 125 thousand bucks?! I must be nuts!*, he thought. He sat swishing a snifter of cognac, watching the set in its polished wood armoire. The cameras cut away from Mike Wallace, and Fidelity's big moment came on screens across America. In what seemed to Sid less time than it took to castle, the spot was over. Sid sat for a very long evening looking out the window at Central Park in the dark. How could he have spent over \$4,000 a second on *that*?

The next morning when Sid called his office, it took him quite a while to get through. When he did, his harried staff explained that Fidelity's telephones were ringing off the desks. There was a reason companies spend six figures to show their wares on prime time television. Millions of people had learned about Fidelity, and hundreds of them were calling to find out about the magical chess computer that spoke. Sid continued to make the right moves, and Fidelity grew ever bigger.

LIVING IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, GUARDED BY AN ATTACK CRANE

Certainly Sidney was an extraordinary businessman. He was also an unsurpassed family man. In 1979, having chalked up success after success, Sidney decided to move both his family and his entire business away from the cold gusts off Lake Michigan to Miami. He purchased several rare acres of ground rising above sea level in residential Miami. How did they find the property? Actually, Sharon and Sid had occasion to go to dinner at a four-star restaurant in Miami. They liked its location so much, they bought the restaurant and replaced it with a rambling home.

Resembling a prestigious U.S. embassy abroad, Sid's family grounds, which he and wife Sharon named "Eden au Lac," are secluded behind a seven-foot-high wall that permitted Sidney to shelter his collection of classic luxury cars, and to indulge his love of rare plants and exotic animals. Visitors to his home grounds on the way to a few sets of tennis or an Olympic-sized

swim might say hello to beautiful and rare Lemurs (favorites of Sharon) and would certainly be closely guarded by Stella, an imposing Stanley Crane who once roamed the grounds, looking for foolishly bared toes. On the way, guests would pass a pair of black swans swimming in an Edenic pond (the Lac in “Eden au Lac,” featuring a waterfall. The wall above the cascading water is adorned with a mural by internationally renowned artist Yakov Heller. Through hard work and smart moves, Sid had brought his family to an earthly paradise.

Visitors inside the main house would come across, among other unusual finds, an extremely rare Miami wine cellar—Sid was, typically, planning ahead when he had selected a hard-to-find “hill.” Descending into a connoisseur’s collection, visitors were watched over by an eerily realistic human skeleton named “Fortunato,” after Edgar Allan Poe’s unfortunate, walled-up dupe in the *Cask of Amontillado*. The presence of the skeleton argued for enjoying your vintage wine while you can. It also discouraged a visitor from hanging behind when his host left the cellar. (Careful planning again?)

KNOWING WHEN TO DUCK

Sid never lost his sense of timing. By 1989, a recession was in the wind, and Sid was sensitive to its warning breezes. He sold Fidelity Electronics at the top of its value to Hegener and Glaser. H&G, a German public firm headquartered in Munich, manufactured and distributed a popular European line of chess computers under the brand name “Mephisto.” H&G wanted to crack open distribution in the U.S., but couldn’t do so, partly because Fidelity had earned such a lock on the American market. So H&G was ready to pay a fancy *pfennig* to buy out its fiercest competitor and at the same time take the left lane of the U.S. marketing *autobahn*. Unfortunately for H&G, you can own the road, but you still have to drive the car. After five profit-making years under Sid’s leadership, Fidelity faltered quickly under the new management. Four years of trying to use German methods to sell electronics in America put the once proud industry leader to rest.

JUST WAITING TO SEE WHAT WILL POP UP

In the fall of 1992, Sid bought the rights and patented a non-electronic but nevertheless innovative product. What looked like a large canvas frisbee could be thrown into the air above your head—only to pop open like a parachute and land on the ground a complete, waterproof tent. All in three seconds! It was no toy but an almost effortless way to pitch a real camping tent. Before long Sid and his crew were back in trade shows—this time hunting and camping exhibitions—tossing tents in the air and taking orders. Of course Sid developed many ingenious applications.

By 1995, Sid's tents were popping open all over the nation on movie screens in the major Paramount Pictures release *Congo*, written by Michael Crichton, author of *Jurassic Park*. In one of the many stunning compliments to Sid's entrepreneurial career, *Congo's* script even claimed that NASA developed these special tents! Of course Sid made the most of the opportunity. When the June release opened, one thousand movie theaters displayed the tents in a promotional scene in their lobbies. Audiences were told to purchase their own Pop-Up tents at their local Sears. Soon Sid's tents were falling to earth from Australia to the Arab Emirates.

EXCALIBUR ELECTRONICS

He joined the firm his super-salesman son Shane had founded in Sid's absence from the electronic-chess marketplace. Sid became Chairman of the Board of Excalibur Electronics of Miami, and he and his son were an unstoppable team. Beginning in 1992, Shane had taken Excalibur from a startup company to a firm that owned most of the U.S. chess computer market. Excalibur's products are now carried by the top 200 retailers in the U.S. and Canada. From Toys R Us to Sears and Sharper Image, and in thousands of smaller retailers, you can see Excalibur's knight-in-armor logo. "We make you think!" is the very appropriate motto of the Excalibur team, headquartered next to the Sidney Samole Chess Museum in Miami.

Along the way, Shane and Sid got together with longtime friend Al Lawrence and his partners to produce their patented invention,

Night Navigator, a hand-held device that allows anyone, without special expertise, to locate night-sky objects such as constellations and planets. You can even simply point the product at an object to identify it. In three successful years in the market place with Night Navigator, Sid and Shane had placed the product everywhere, from FAO Schwartz to Sears, Penney's, and dozens of top catalogers. Even Radio Shack carried a version. Co-author Lawrence owes a lot to the Samoles' friendship and business acumen.

GIVING BACK TO CHESS

For decades Sidney Samole sponsored chess. Fidelity sponsored first prize in many U.S. Open Championships. In 1988 Fidelity sponsored the U.S. Invitational Championship when this flagship event was in danger of not being held. In 1988 the U.S. Chess Federation honored Sid with its highest award for corporate sponsorship, the Gold Koltanowski Medal. On June 11, 1994, Excalibur sponsored the largest and most successful one-day chess promotion in history, the U.S. Chessathon in New York City's Grand Central Station, where chess-playing children dominated the huge main room, decked with USCF banners. Approximately 400,000 people witnessed the event!

In 1995 Sidney was appointed a trustee of the U.S. Chess Trust. In 1996 he was elected Vice President of the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame. In 1997 the U.S. Chess Trust renamed the chess museum "The Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Chess Museum."

Commercial chess computers have dramatically advanced the popularity of the royal game, first in the U.S. and then around the world, by capturing the public's imagination. Chess computers have helped millions to learn chess. And chess computer manufacturers—led by Sid's example—were some of the very first sponsors to contribute significant and consistent sources of income to organized chess.

As a matter of fact, it was largely through the popularity of the chess computers in its own growing 1980s sales program that the United States Chess Federation was able to purchase outright its

two-story headquarters in New Windsor, New York, on the Hudson River an hour north of Manhattan.

Today it's hard to imagine the chess world without computers. And it's equally hard to imagine being able to appreciate fully American chess history without understanding the position of Sid Samole—and visiting the World Chess Hall of Fame & Sidney Samole Museum. Opening its doors to the public in 2001, the Museum honors the most important men and women in U.S. chess history, enshrines fascinating memorabilia, and offers chess movies (in its own theatre) and interactive computer displays for visitors of all ages. Among its historical keepsakes is Sid Samole's first commercial chess microcomputer, the legendary 1980 World Computer Chess Champion, Chess Challenger—the product inspired by science fiction.

Sidney Samole was a big-muscled man who could leg-press more than a thousand pounds. But he was a man of many kinds of strengths, among them humor, great dignity, and the inclusiveness to involve anyone in a project who could really contribute. The people who worked with him followed him for decades, across state lines and company identities. That original engineer who created the first working chess program? That's Ron Nelson—he's still with the Samole business, Excalibur Electronics in Miami.

Sidney gave us chess players a lot, and he enjoyed doing it. He's missed, as all great men are missed, in different ways by different people. Those who know his contributions to the history of U.S. and world chess lament the passing of his galvanizing presence in that arena. His friends miss his advice, his humor, his keen insight, and his unwavering support. His family misses their patriarch in thousands of private ways.

We're partially consoled by the fact that Sidney will remain with us for a long, long time—through his museum and through the partners he gave us. We like that fact.

How about a nice game of chess?

The background of the entire page is a stylized American flag. It features a blue field with white stars on the left and red and white wavy stripes on the right. The text is overlaid on this background.

Choose your

**PART
TWO**

Openings

Chapter 11

White is Always Equal, but Black is Always Worse!

How to Study the Openings, Part I

We all know the feeling. We decide to choose a serious opening repertoire. Our idea is first to find a promising game-starting scheme we like and then to learn it and stick with it. We want to make ourselves—as Burgess Meredith, portraying boxer Rocky Balboa’s trainer, put it in imitation Brooklynese—“a very dangerous poy-son.”

So we sit down with our *MCO*, our Opening Encyclopedia—or our ChessBase or BookUp disks. After hours or days, what’s our finding? See if this sounds familiar: “When I study White, the opening is always equal. When I study Black, the opening is always worse!” Just so you understand that we all hit this wall, regardless of rating—the common complaint is in this instance voiced by none other than World Champion Tigran Petrosian.

We’re going to start discussing openings with you where we think it’s best to begin, long before the point of sitting down with an opening tome. We need first to talk about some basic realities, approaches and attitudes that go into selecting and studying your openings.

LUCKY IN LOVE—OR HOW TO PUT THE ROMANCE BACK IN YOUR ROMANISHIN

Some of us do manage to match up with an opening that fits like a Speedo (or like an Eddie-Bauer relaxed-fit, if you're a fellow boomer). Finding a favorite opening can be more a matter of passion than paperwork.

It's a lucky player who finds an opening system he loves—loves to rely on, loves to protect from those who would inflict harm on it with their new, villainous ideas. A player and his favorite opening are really a bit of a romance. Even a tyro in such a relationship can rise on occasion to the role of hero to rescue his maiden in distress. (We make this analogy despite the danger of your thinking we're channeling Freud and Reuben Fine.)

As a handy example, early in his amateur tournament experience, co-author Al Lawrence found his sweetheart opening—the Scandinavian. (Back then, American players called it the Center Counter.) In the 1960s, the Center Counter (1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Qxd5) was commonly considered a joke, played either by masters who lived before modern principles were understood, or by modern park-players who just as often opened by advancing a rook's pawn.

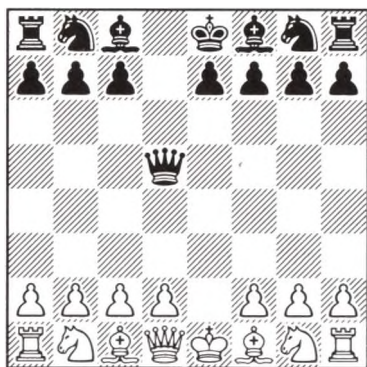


Diagram 25

The Center Counter after 2. ... Qxd5

The CC was a great choice for Al. There was little theory to

**IT'S A LUCKY PLAYER WHO FINDS
AN OPENING SYSTEM HE
LOVES ... A PLAYER AND
HIS FAVORITE OPENING
ARE REALLY A BIT
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learn. His opponents underestimated his choice. Al became a bit of a Center Counter expert—enough to spot the holes in popular books. He was able to synthesize old, forgotten ideas and even to create a few new wrinkles. And he never played with as much commitment and focus as when his opponent could be seen smirking on the other side of a Center Counter. But these benefits were after-effects, not the selection criteria.

Al never successfully courted a debut as White or as a defense to 1. d4. He dated around, but, when estranged from 1. e4, would wind up a lonely, on-the-board bachelor. As research for this chapter, he dug out a shoebox of games scores (let's just say his playing heyday was a bit before the Pentium chip). His best winning percentage by far, as White or Black, was as second-fiddle against 1. e4.

Of course, in time, this opening from the other side of the tracks won respect. The Center Counter was played even in a world championship match, Kasparov—Anand, 1995. In a dramatic turn-of-fate, there are now even serious, admiring books and articles on the opening! Perhaps every chess wallflower will have its day.

Al's is just a case in point. We all know club players who will take on all opponents and all debaters on the topic of their favorite starting moves. How do these lucky-in-love players find their beloved beginnings? Most often, it takes place as it did with Al. He happened to see an old game by German Jacques Mieses. ("Mister My-sis?" asked the journalist. "Meister Mee-sees," came the master's mnemonic-device correction.) For no completely

logical reason, the moonlight struck the board. Al was hooked. The fact that the first dates were fun clinched the relationship.

Even on a very top level of play, these same “romantic” factors can play a part. Co-author and three-time U.S. Champion GM Lev Alburt is famous for his Alekhine’s Defense. Despite the prevailing opinion that after 1. e4, 1. ... Nf6 is not quite correct, Lev played it consistently at the highest levels, with rewarding results.

THE SWITCHING SYNDROME

Since we’re now moving from romance to reality, it’s time for the “safe-chess” speech. The brief version: As amateurs, many of us spend too much time trying to memorize rote opening moves. That said, none of us wants to reach move 12 with such a steeply up-hill battle that all the strategy and tactics in our head won’t get us to the top. As a matter of fact, however, part of our theme is saving time in your opening preparation. Switching from opening to opening, memorizing and getting discouraged, and never making much use of all the time you’ve invested—this syndrome is as impractical as it gets.

What we need is a sort of computerized, chess-opening dating service. After all, we could sit home for years, or even go to a hundred clubs, and not find that magic partner. The B. Dalton’s are always packed with self-help “relationship” books. Is there a logical approach that will at least narrow the field and provide us with some *sympatico* chess systems? Indeed there is. A simple review of the current state of openings and some empathetic but razor-sharp logic from GM Alburt can cut through years of disappointing dating—and bring an end to this courtship analogy. Let’s take a look at the basic points to consider when choosing an opening repertoire.

1. Set reasonable goals for your opening

Barring blunders from our opponents, what should we expect from a satisfactory opening?

- A. Regardless of its theoretical assessment, we want a position we know how to play.

- B. With White, we want a position that is at least equal, and prefer to have some type of advantage, although demanding a significant advantage is unrealistic.
- C. With Black, we want an equal position, or—if it is slightly worse—we want a position we know how to hold. For example, an aggressive player may accept a material deficit for an attack that doesn't quite fully compensate, but be comfortable with his role.

2. Make use of what you know

Every player knows something, sometimes quite a bit, about opening play. If you're an amateur, certainly there are gaps in understanding that plague your results and lead you into uncomfortable positions. But without good reason, it makes no sense to discard what you've spent precious time learning, to start again at square one with an opening you've just met. There's no substitute for experience, and you've had experience with what you play. Getting good at anything, especially chess, correlates to using your time effectively. Throwing away what you know is not good time management.

3. Realize that openings are schizophrenic; don't waste your time with the fantasy of the "tailor-made" repertoire

We sometimes hear about "tailor-made" opening repertoires. Some book, some approach, or some personal trainer purports to know your style and then put together openings that will match your playing persona, bringing out the winning you. Without question, an experienced, qualified chess teacher can help you to improve much faster and absorb important principles more thoroughly than you could ever accomplish on your own.

But there just isn't an opening with only one personality. Certainly, in every major opening, you can't play in a way that will guide you only to tactical terrain or prevent positional games, or vice versa. Try staying in a "solid" Caro-Kann against someone who wants to pry the game open for an attack. Even Mikhail Botvinnik couldn't do it in 1960. Or try playing the Sicilian for a

sharp, attacking game against an expert in White's c3 system, and you'll likely find yourself in a positional struggle. Some variations of the French are passive, while some are downright counterattacks. Some forms of the Ruy Lopez are positional, some are wild and hoary. Some Giuoco Pianos are hardly pianissimo. Your opponent can play the Queen's Gambit like the draw-prone Schlechter or like the checkmate-obsessed Marshall.

Openings are schizophrenic. So unless you suffer from multiple personalities and have learned to change them on cue, whatever variation you play, you risk getting a position that doesn't match your own attitudes about aggression or passivity. Learn to be flexible.

4. Petrosian's Rule

Sometimes winning is the only acceptable outcome. Maybe it's the game that clinches the club championship or one that bags a big class prize. In such a situation, should you open and play differently? Is more aggression called for? Generally, playing what you know as well as you can is the best choice.

The great Petrosian was patron to the young and talented Russian-Armenian master Karen Gregorian. Once Gregorian returned from an important qualifying tournament and showed Petrosian a game in which the young man had played some very risky opening moves as Black and lost. Petrosian cross-examined him in a characteristically chiding way.

Petrosian: "Why did you play such terrible moves? Even you should understand these are bad."

Gregorian: "I had to win—to qualify."

Petrosian: "Make a note. It's much easier to play for a win from an equal position than from a bad position!"

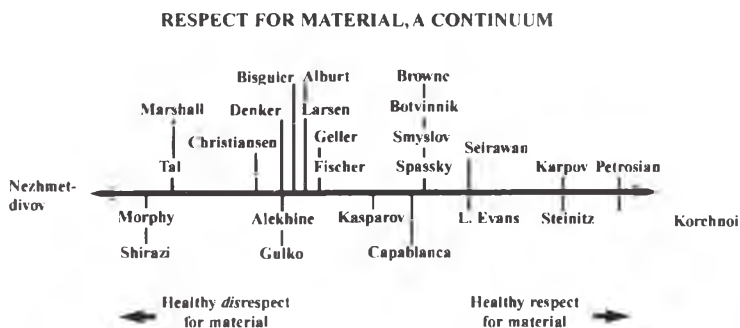
RESPECT FOR MATERIAL

You will have your share of opportunities to make choices *within* the openings you play. If you've a tactical predilection, for example, you may be stuck in a "positional" opening and yet sometimes find a line to make long-term strategy the last thing on your

opponent's mind. Tal could create tactics in what seemed like the most placid situations. On the other end of the spectrum, Capablanca, Petrosian or Korchnoi could make sacrificing a pawn for the initiative against them seem on a par with the W.C. Fields' film character who invested in "beefsteak mines."

The variety of perspectives on the value of material versus the initiative is a fascinating subject in itself and certainly relevant to the overall topic of opening move choices. All players fall someplace on the material-initiative continuum. Sometimes our chess heroes have a very similar place on the continuum to our own.

Take a look at the following chart. Since "conservatives" are most often talked about as being "on the right," we'll follow that tradition. Please keep in mind that most great players can do all things well. Petrosian exploded some drop-dead combinations. Tal ground out some ingenious endgames. These are only generalizations and informed opinions may differ.



Where do you think you would fall? You'll undoubtedly profit from playing over the games of the great players near your spot on the spectrum. Pay attention to the openings and sub-variations they choose. See how you like them.

DESPERATE ATTACK OR STUBBORN DEFENSE

How do you react when you're in a bad position? Do you dig into the trenches, trying to find the best defensive moves, reasoning that your prospects lie with testing your opponent's resolve,



**ALTHOUGH MOST GMS
FEEL THAT WHITE CAN'T
FORCE A WIN, BOTH OF
THESE PLAYERS FELT BLACK
WAS DOOMED AGAINST BEST PLAY!**

technique and patience? Or do you quickly throw everything you have left at the enemy, thinking that your best chance is to confuse him or to go out in a blaze of glory with an all-out attack?

There's a fascinating pair of Soviet grandmasters—among the greatest players of the White pieces—who illustrate these opposite reactions to a bad position. And there's an extra wrinkle that's on-point with our discussion of the openings—although most GMs feel that White can't force a win, both of these players felt Black was nearly doomed against best play!

GM Semyon Furman was an eminent theoretician who helped a young Anatoly Karpov become world champion. Karpov wisely made him his chief trainer and openings advisor. As a player, Furman was the terror of players of Black. Furman felt that White could force a significant advantage, what *Informant* would mark with a $\pm$. He consistently got great positions out of the opening against the very best. So what did he do when he was forced to play Black? He dug in. He played solidly and passively, offering stubborn, dogged defense, trying to reach the equal position that he felt he didn't deserve. The joke among his peers was that Furman's goal was to reach the weak side of a tricky but drawn rook-and-bishop-versus-rook ending and to defend it to the end of the 50-move rule. A dour outlook to have on half of your professional duties!

GM Lev Polugayevsky was one of the best players in the world throughout the 1970s. As White, he played extremely solid chess, most often getting an advantage that would be evaluated as “plus-

over-equal.” He agreed with Furman’s “White-to-play-and-win” attitude. How did he react as Black? He played razor-sharp, few-holds-barred reactions. His pet variation in the Najdorf Sicilian, which bares his name today, bordered on the dubious. But he kept it playable by endless analysis to meet each new challenge. Against 1. d4, he played the edgy Meran variation.

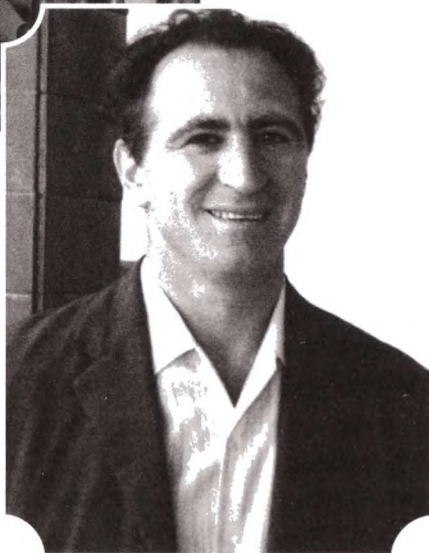
NEZHMETDINOV THE LEFTIST

In the chart on page 151, you noticed one name floating by itself far to the left of even Tal. International Master Rashid Gibyatovich Nezhmetdinov was the first man to hold the Soviet master title in both chess and checkers. He probably played more beautiful tactical games than Tal and Spielmann put together. In the next chapter, we’ll tell you the story of how a young Alexei Suetin couldn’t avoid a series of Nezhmetdinov’s sacrifices, even after Suetin’s trainer predicted exactly what would happen!

We’ll also continue with our advice on the best ways to choose and study openings.



Like the rest of us, World Champ Tigran Petrosian complained that when he studied openings for White, they were always equal, but when he studied for Black, they were always worse.



GM Lev Polugayevsky was solid as White. But when his back was to the wall as Black, he threw caution to the wind.

Chapter 12

Master-Chef

Hors d'Oeuvres from Your Own Toaster Oven

How to Study the Openings, Part II

Dick Katahn, author of the very famous “no-fat” dieting approach, is a student of Lev Alburt. Taking a page from Katahn, one of our major themes in this chapter is learning to trim the fat from your opening preparation—and learning to cook on your own rather than always ordering from the same expensive restaurant menu as everyone else.

Whatever your playing strength, nothing will improve your opening results more than home preparation—your own work in your own home over your own board. For the serious who have the opportunity, trainers can be a tremendous advantage, of course. But it depends on the trainer, and on your goals.

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU UNEMPLOYED

There’s a story about Alexey Suetin boning up for one of his first strong Soviet invitationals. As was the custom then, he was provided a coach, an old master from Belorussia who was up on opening theory. Before the first game, the two met.

“Who’s your first opponent?” asked the old master.

“I have Black against Furman,” responded the young Suetin—

later himself to become a top-performing GM and an important opening theoretician.

“Well, then there’s no need to prepare. Furman will play 1. d4, gain an advantage and keep pressuring your position. If you do manage to reach time control in a position that isn’t completely hopeless, then we’ll analyze the adjourned position.”

Suetin was surprised at such a reaction, of course. He went to the game, and ... Furman played 1. d4, got an advantage, pressured Black, and forced Suetin to resign before adjournment. Alexey went back to the old master.

“Who’s your next opponent?” the trainer asked.

“Rashid Nezhmetdinov, but I have White.”

“Well, color won’t matter. Nezhmetdinov can play any opening. Somewhere he will sacrifice a pawn for the initiative. Then he will sacrifice another. Then he will sacrifice a piece for an attack. Then he’ll probably sacrifice another piece to drive your king in the center. Then he will checkmate you.”

Suetin was upset. What kind of help was this? Alexey went to his game, and the old trainer’s prediction again came true. (We should note on behalf of verisimilitude if one knows Nezhmetdinov’s games, such a prognostication is hardly difficult. Nezhmetdinov polished off many strong opponents in this same way.)

Now Suetin was very upset. He called the Belorussian sports ministry, telling them that they must recall this fatalistic fellow immediately. The shocked trainer was sent back to Minsk, where he walked around the chess club complaining of his unfair treatment.

“I don’t understand why this young Alexey is so upset with me,” the trainer would say. “Everything I told him turned out to be exactly right!”

Sometimes a trainer or coach is smarter to be helpful than to be right. So we’ll frame a few questions from your point of view.

**SOMETIMES A TRAINER
OR COACH IS SMARTER
TO BE HELPFUL
THAN RIGHT.**



HOW MUCH OF MY TIME SHOULD I SPEND ON THE OPENINGS?

Our Suetin story is a parable of perspectives, to be sure, but certainly even today's teachers and trainers risk, if not their livelihood, at least their student's total confidence, by telling their charges the truth—opening study just doesn't deserve to be so all-consuming, for two basic reasons:

1. There are lots of other areas to study in chess that will make a more dramatic difference in your results—just one compelling example is the study of tactics.
2. There have been many grandmasters who became prominent, even world-class players using an opening system roundly condemned as at least slightly inferior. (Previously, we discussed the crucial psychological aspects of choosing an opening you like to play—one that's really a sort of team mate or even “foxhole buddy” you're willing to depend on and defend from the malevolent designs of opponents.)

HOW DO I KNOW IF I SHOULD LEARN A COMPLETELY NEW SYSTEM?

If you have a leaky roof, but one that's structurally sound, you can put a pan under the hole and hope it doesn't rain very often. On the other extreme, you could spring for a work crew to clamor over your head for a week to pry up and replace all the old shingles and wood. Or save thousands of dollars by having the roofers come for an afternoon to patch and repair the roof in the right places.

Learning a new opening system from near scratch is the most time-consuming step, much more time-intensive than beefing up the one you already play and know something about. As you read

**KEEPING TRACK
OF WHAT TOP GMS ARE
PLAYING IN YOUR OPENING
... WILL OCCUPY
ONLY A REASONABLE
AMOUNT OF YOUR TIME.**

on and consider, you may just decide to keep playing your old tried and mostly true, while doing some “patching” that doesn’t take nearly so much time.

So unless your metaphorical roof is ready to cave in at the next high-wind, or unless you just want different-colored shingles and have the wherewithal (which, in the case of chess openings is time, memory and patience), the prescription of choice is probably a repair job. After that, routine maintenance—keeping track of what the top GMs are playing in your opening and being prepared—will occupy only a reasonable amount of the time you have available for chess.

**SHOULD I LEARN A SECOND
OPENING AS A “SURPRISE WEAPON,”
OR CAN I MOW THE LAWN?**

There are enough choices within any opening to allow opportunities to surprise your opponent. The most practical advice is to know one opening very well for each major possibility, and to know a little bit about nearly everything else. To this day, Reuben Fine’s *Ideas Behind the Chess Openings* remains one of the best ways to learn something about practically every game-opener, while learning a lot about underlying ideas that apply to many different openings. It’s an old book and doesn’t have the latest analysis, but that’s not its point anyway. And treat the biases of the book—for example, underrating current top-40 releases, such as the Scotch and the Benko—as proof that much of opening theory is faddishness. Fine’s classic work is still available—only a mouse-click away.

Most top players are unabashedly specialists in a few openings nowadays—normally just enough to cover the opponent’s main possibilities. A few, like Kasparov, seem encyclopedic in their opening choices, but after all, they have teams of researchers and theoreticians.

Actually, the best thing about knowing a second opening well, if you have time, is not that you can use it as a surprise weapon against your opponent, but that you learn the ideas and themes of different types of positions. But once again, from the point of view of real people with jobs to do and lawns to cut, a second opening covering the same ground usually steals time from other important areas of your chess development.

KARPOV GOT AN EDGE AGAINST ONE OF MY LINES—SHALL I GIVE IT UP?

The dark side of our openings being part of our “team” is that we can hold them to too high a standard or even blame them for defeats that take place long after the opening phase. Ridiculous as it sounds, when we scavenge through opening books for the “perfect line,” we often wind up rejecting a possibility because it ends in a loss against a top GM or even a world champion. This is a corollary to the cynical outlook that an opening is evaluated by the results of a few key games, and the games were won by the stronger player.

A true story about GM Lev Alburt. When Lev was an expert, he took up a certain line in the Sicilian. He stuck with the variation as he rose through the ranks. As a master he contributed to the line’s theory. He drew and even defeated famous grandmasters with his variation. So he kept playing it. True, his own analysis unearthed one line that Lev worried about, a series of moves that left White with an edge out of the opening. But no one, not even top GMs, seemed to have discovered the sequence. No one played it against him, or against anyone else.

Then in 1971, in the semifinals for the Soviet championship, he was paired as Black against a new 20-year-old grandmaster named Anatoly Karpov, already coached by renowned opening

theoretician Semyon Furman. Karpov opened with 1. e4, and Alburt was soon in the familiar territory of his trusty Sicilian. And then he was in the line he hoped he would never see in a tournament game.

ANATOLY KARPOV—LEV ALBURT

Daugavpils, 1971

SICILIAN DEFENSE

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e6

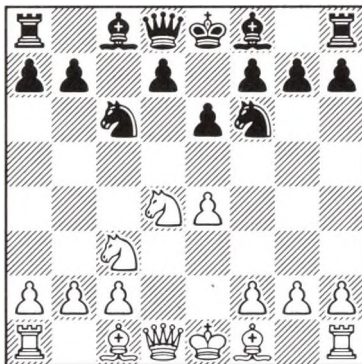


Diagram 26

6. Ndb5 Bb4 7. a3 Bxc3+ 8. Nxc3 d5 9. exd5 exd5 10. Bd3 d4 11. Ne2 0-0 12. 0-0 Qd5 13. Nf4!

White drives Black's queen from her dominant central position.

13. ... Qd6 14. Nh5!±

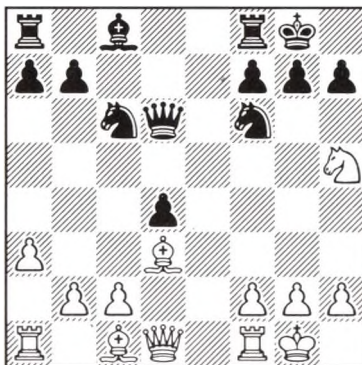


Diagram 27

Karpov had played the best line for White and gotten a small edge. Alburt defended well, but the game was adjourned with Karpov retaining this edge, not necessarily enough to force a win, but an advantage. Another full, six-hour session saw the game adjourned a second time, this time in a lost position for Lev. Alburt was disgusted. He felt that everyone would now play the same line against him and he would suffer in this way as long as he played the variation. He gave it up.

He says now that he knows this was a very premature reaction. After all, Karpov went on to become world champion and to dominate top-level chess until Kasparov arrived on the scene. The line Karpov played to get a small edge would not be to everyone's taste, nor within most GMs ability to maintain and convert to a win. It's true that Lev went on to a new, famous "relationship" with Alekhine's Defense, but perhaps for the wrong reasons.

The next time you're tempted to switch your opening because the latest *Informant* game shows how Kasparov beat NM Rollovervitch in 90 moves in the line—don't. There isn't a line that wouldn't look bad in such a match-up. And when you lose in the city championship to a smartly played mating attack by the ultimate winner, don't rush to blame the opening. The reason for your loss may lie elsewhere.

WHY IS HOME COOKING BETTER THAN TAKEOUT?

One of the best ways to dish it out is to cook at home. You don't have to be a master chef to prepare hors d'oeuvres that are both original and sound. Sometimes what you find may be a tactical trick. Perhaps with best play your find peters out to equality faster than the main line, but an opponent seeing it for the first time will likely slip into a brutal trap, or he may panic in the face of the unknown and try a kamikaze counterattack. Sometimes you'll even find something that becomes a new main line—for example, the Moody-Alburt gambit.

In the early 1980s, Richard Moody answered one of Lev Alburt's advertisements that offered answers to chess questions.

At first, Moody's frequent questions were very simple to answer.

"Why can't I take the pawn on b7 here?"

"Because Black mates you in one with 13. ... Qxh2."

After a while the questions became more difficult. Perhaps the answer would be that Moody's move left him down a tempo compared to the main line, or with a knight on a bit less effective square than in theory. Then the questions grew into gray areas where Lev couldn't pinpoint a drawback to Moody's suggestion. The progression of insight was intriguing to Alburt. Then Moody began to advocate a specific new opening sequence—and not one neck-deep in the latest Dragon line, but one that begins on only the third move of the venerable King's Gambit!

Moody wanted to discourage Black from playing ... d5, a good defense against the King's Gambit. So he came up with:

1. e4 e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Qe2!?

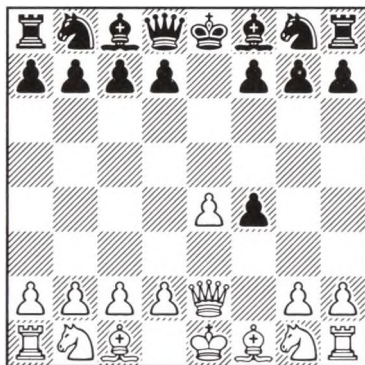


Diagram 28

Even though ... d5 turns out to be playable anyway, you can see that Moody's new move came from an intriguing idea. His variation turns out to be completely playable. He even wrote a book about it. You can imagine the confidence, not to mention the fun, Moody has playing his own opening! Once Lev Alburt was having dinner with world champion Garry Kasparov and American superstar grandmaster and opening guru Max Dlugy. Lev showed

them Moody's move. Their verdict after a ten-minute-long consultation attempting to refute it? Perfectly playable. (Your opponent's moves will normally not approach the quality and depth of ten minutes concentration on this level!)

So what was this Richard Moody—discoverer of new, playable strategies on the third move of the King's Gambit—rated? Well, he was unrated for years. Then Lev encouraged him to play in tournaments, explaining that the experience would make him an even better openings researcher. Eventually, Richard played in a few events and is rated about 1700.

Another example proved much more influential even at the highest levels. Evgeny Sveshnikov was a Soviet expert when he began to research and advocate the line in the Sicilian that bears his name today.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5!?

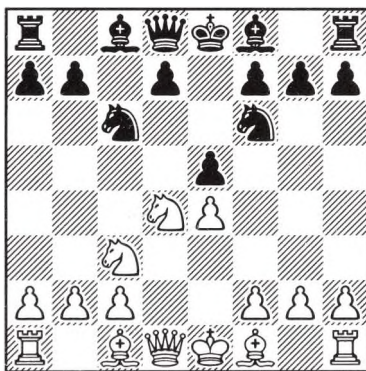


Diagram 29

It was in very large part because of his work and play of this sharp variation that he became a grandmaster. Not as surprising as it sounds—he knew the middlegames that grew out of his openings, and even the endgames that resulted from the middlegames. This is ultimately the kind of understanding you'll gain if you work at your opening preparation logically.

Certainly, anyone rated 1800 or above who likes research has a



chance to find interesting and meaningful ideas on his own. Even players well below “A” level can try—and very likely profit from the effort. Old books and magazines can provide excellent hunting grounds.



Above: Alexey Suetin: His trainer was always right, but never helpful. Left: 12th world champ Anatoly Karpov in his prime. Below, left to right: GM Lajos Portisch; Bill Church, “Chicken” millionaire and chess patron; Anatoly Karpov; Tigran Petrosian at the famous San Antonio, Texas, tournament in 1972.



Chapter 13

A Search Engine for MyOpenings.com!

How to Study the Openings, Part III

In this chapter, we offer a method of learning any new system, a method that will help produce a long-term relationship. Yet this procedure won't occupy all the remaining time left over from your day job. We begin with three frequent and reasonable questions on the subject, along with our best answers. We'll finish by giving you two brief "blueprints" of some opening moves and their current standing in theory.

WHAT MATERIALS SHOULD I STUDY TO LEARN A NEW OPENING?

When you are learning a new opening, look for resources that contain more words than moves. In the early stages, ideas are far more important than variations. Ideas give you a context for memory. Magazine articles can be an excellent start; after all, they have to make their points quickly and clearly. Lev became one of the most important practitioners of the Benko Gambit after reading Walter Browne's 1971 *Chess Life* article. Browne's piece was widely influential because he brilliantly illustrated the ideas of the fledgling system. Books can be a terrific aid, but they have

to pass the more-words-than-moves test too. Video tapes are generally excellent starting material because the good ones, like a personal chess lesson, contain more guiding principles than variations.

WHAT'S THE FASTEST AND BEST WAY TO STUDY A NEW OPENING?

Once you get the right kind of materials, you should begin by looking at your opponent's main lines only. Skip your opponent's sidelines for now, but look for sidelines you like on your side of the column. Many books are not laid out this way. They stray into early diversions, with the plan of being comprehensive and sequential. Don't succumb. Ruthlessly skip the distractions as you follow the main line. If the book you're using makes this too hard, find another source to study. Your time is too valuable, and your focus on the right stuff at the right time is critical.

Why this procedure? You can assume that if you like to play against the opponent's main line, his sidelines will fall into place. When you go back to them, you'll find that theory gives you specific recommendations and even refutations of these second choices for your opponent. There will often even be several lines for you to choose from. In the meantime, if you don't care for the positions that result from the main line, you haven't wasted your time with trivia in an opening you decide not to use.

THEORY OFFERS MILLIONS OF MOVES—IS THERE A LOGICAL PROCEDURE THAT WILL MAKE MY SEARCH EFFICIENT?

Our whole emphasis in the previous two chapters was on beginning your thinking miles before players normally do when they window shop for openings. This investment of time you make on the "front end" will save you untold hours and countless blind alleys later in the process.

Suppose you're looking for an offense, and you, like Paul Morphy and Bobby Fischer before you, decide on the time-tested and classical 1. e4. What should you do next?

**CURRENT THEORY
HOLDS THAT BLACK
HAS THE BEST HOPES OF
REACHING A TOTALLY
EQUAL POSITION BY USING
ONE OF THESE THREE OPENERS.**



SEARCHING ON “MyOpenings.com”

Those of us who regularly search out information on the net know that the better we learn to choose the right “search engines” and how to submit our requests, the less flotsam in the tide of returns. Let’s take a look at the substitute for Boolean logic we can apply to our magazines, books or tapes for gathering info on the opening we have in mind. (By the way, a quick on-line check of the fantasy “MyOpenings.com” reveals that someone has reserved but not yet developed that domain name. Will it be a future chess site that will do this whole process for us?)

Start by taking some simple notes right off the bat. Write down the responses that constitute the top tier of defense to 1. e4, the openings thought to be completely solid. No ranking is implied by the order of our list:

1. ... e5

1. ... c5

1. ... c6

Current theory holds that Black has the best hopes of reaching a totally equal position by using one of these three openers. You should look at the main lines for Black of all three before delving into any side variations for Black. The main lines are both the most likely variations you’ll see as well as the toughest moves to meet. Decide what lines look good to you against Black’s main lines. Skip everything else for now. You can assume that against Black’s side variations, effective answers are there for you. They’ll be worth finding and learning only if you like the positions that result from playing against Black’s best. If you do like

the results, go directly to the main lines of the next tier:

The next theoretical tier follows closely behind the big three. Again, they could be listed in any order:

1. ... e6

1. ... d6

1. ... g6

Due to the efforts of Alexander Morozevich in the French and Alex Chernin in the Pirc, these openings have moved very close to the top tier. Are they soon to join the lineup of theory's darlings?

Below this secondary, almost-equal-to-the-top-tier grouping, there are responses to 1. e4 that, theoretically, make it more difficult for Black to equalize. They aren't sidelines. You should examine them as Black main lines against your contemplated 1. e4, looking for variations you like. Once again, the order of our listing is random.

1. ... Nf6

1. ... d5

These last two responses logically lead to positions in which Black still has a chance to equalize or, at worst, to positions that favor White only slightly, as opposed to some real sideline like 1. ... b6 or 1. ... a6, after which best play leads to a distinct advantage for White.

EVEN CANDIDATE MOVES NEED TO KNOW THE POLLS

In any election year, we're used to hearing polls and statistics about everything. Try this one: it's a way to explain the differences between theory's finest and its second string. Statistics confirm that White has some advantage. In 100 grandmaster games, White averages a score of 55 points to Black's 45. But, like the interesting pollsters do, let's break down the statistics by subgroups. If White plays 1. e4 and Black answers 1. ... e5, White's results go down to 53—but only if he plays the strongest move, 2.

Nf3. If, for example, he instead plays 2. Nc3 or 2. f4, his results go down to about 50-50.

FROM THE DEFENSE'S POINT OF VIEW

To give you the picture of how narrow and time-efficient our recommended process can be once you're properly prepared, let's go a step further. Let's presume you're looking for a defense to 1. e4 and are considering 1. ... e5.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3

Skip everything else for now. Theory holds that this is the only move that may lead to an advantage for White. (Remember the polls!) As Black, you could at this point go to the now popular Petrov by playing 2. ... Nf6.

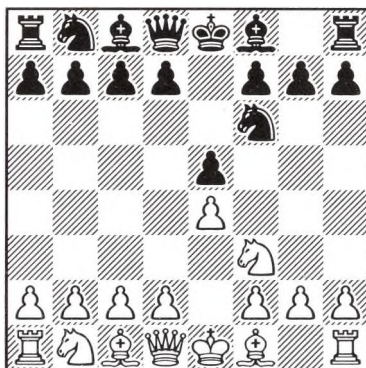


Diagram 30

The Petrov is a *shortcut*. Such shortcuts can save months of opening study, allowing you to spend time on other phases of chess, or even on your backswing.

For a long time, 2. ... Nf6 was considered weaker than 2. ... Nc6. Theory placed it somewhere between 1. ... d6 and 1. ... Nf6. Now, after key games by Karpov, Anand and Kramnik, the Petrov ranks a close second to 2. ... Nc6. Certainly, it requires less knowledge on the part of the defender; its ideas are much simpler than the Ruy. So it requires less memorization. The Petrov has been played much less frequently than the Ruy, so it is less devel-

oped. It's an example of a shortcut in the openings, because it eliminates months of study. After all, it circumvents every other plan that White may have had in mind, from the Ruy Lopez to the Scotch. Shortcuts make it possible for someone to play strong chess without being a full-time professional, and even many modern professionals prefer such shortcuts to allow them time to study the other phases of the game. If you don't like the Petrov, then take a look at the strongest according to theory.

2. ... Nc6

At this point, for a very long time, theory gave its absolute approval to one move only.

3. Bb5

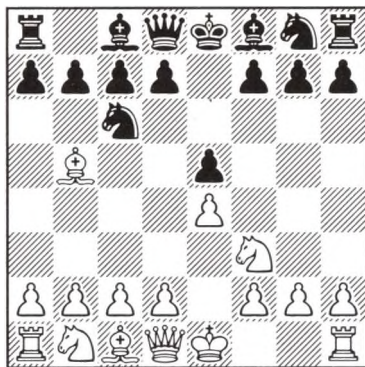


Diagram 31

We used to say: "To become a great player, you must play great Ruys." Post-Kasparov, there are top-echelon professionals who never played the "Spanish Torture" in a single tournament game.

Indeed, in the 1960s and 1970s, it was often said that "To become a great player, you must play great Ruys." The view was that it was only by coping specifically with the richness of the Chigorin Variation, a line large in scope and complex in detail, that one could learn enough about chess to be a truly great play-

er. This was actually true until Kasparov. Nowadays, there are players sitting in the catbird's seat of chess who never played a Ruy on a serious occasion. Vladimir Kramnik is an example. But you'll need to find a defense you trust within this monster-variation. (Looking for a shortcut? Lev played 3. ... f5, the Schliemann Variation, for years, before taking up his Sicilian Variation and then bonding with his Alekhine's. Those with a tactical flare may find it appealing.)

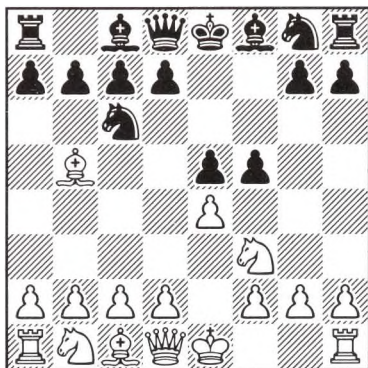


Diagram 32

The Schliemann is another example of a shortcut. It may be just the right J-walk for you if you have a tactical flair—and a schedule too busy to allow time for climbing to the mountaintop of Chigorin-enlightenment.

Nowadays, thanks to Kasparov, White has a promising move other than 3. Bb5.

3. d4

The world champion injected new ideas into the old Scotch. So you need to treat this move as a main line, finding a line to combat it before circling back to look at White's sidelines.

Two nearly final thoughts for now on choosing an opening.



**IF YOU HAVE A JOB
TO GO TO, THEN YOU'LL
WANT TO LOOK FOR
TIME-SAVING SHORTCUTS
AMONG THE LESS DEVELOPED
AND SIDESTEPPING LINES.**

1. Matching your playing personality to your opening

Although it's impossible to control the "personality" of an opening from only one side of the board—we've noted that openings can be schizophrenic—you should give some thought to what kinds of positions you feel most at home in and whether a particular opening has a general reputation to match. If you prefer the quiet strategizing of positional openings, the Caro-Kann may be your choice. If you want sharp, tactical chances, you might try the Sicilian Dragon. If you have something in common with Tal, you might choose a line that sacrifices a pawn for the initiative, even though theory may hold that you get only a half-pawn's worth of play—for example the Schliemann Variation in the Ruy Lopez.

2. Assess the time you have for the openings and make choices that correspond

Chess makes you practical. If you're a young player who has a great memory, an interest in theory, and time to put an emphasis into the opening while still having time to study the rest of chess, then by all means make a choice like 1. ... e5, aiming for a Classical Ruy. Study the Fischer Exchange variation after 3. ... a6. Take on the Scotch and the King's Gambit, along with sharp variations of the Two Knights' or the generally quiet lines of the Giuoco.

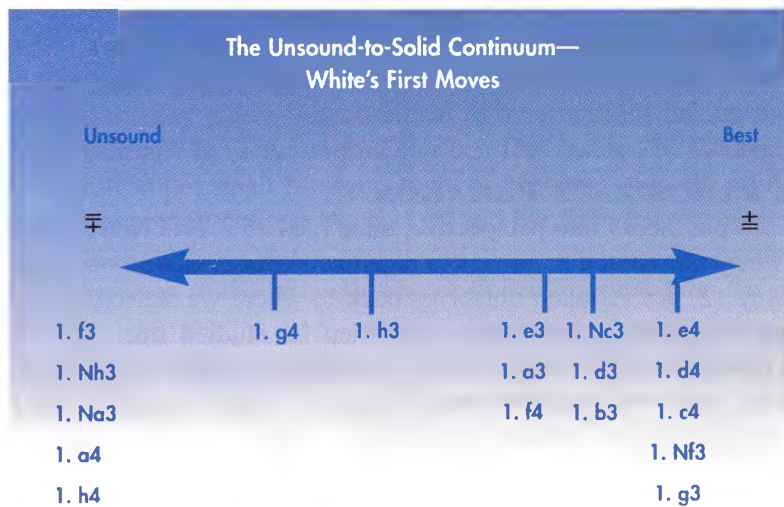
But if you have a job to go to five or six days a week and kids to take to Little League on the weekend, then you'll want to look for time-saving shortcuts among the less developed and sidestepping lines. Staying with our example of looking for a defense

after 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3—the Marshall Gambit is a shortcut in the Ruy. The Petrov, as we’ve pointed out, is an even more limiting shortcut. The Philidor (2. ... d6) likewise cuts across White’s plans. GM Victor Kupreichik of Minsk occasionally played 2. ... Qe7. Even though his competitors knew he might play it, the Belorussian did well with his shortcut. At worst, he got slightly inferior positions that he knew how to handle.

A QUICK BLUEPRINT OF THEORY

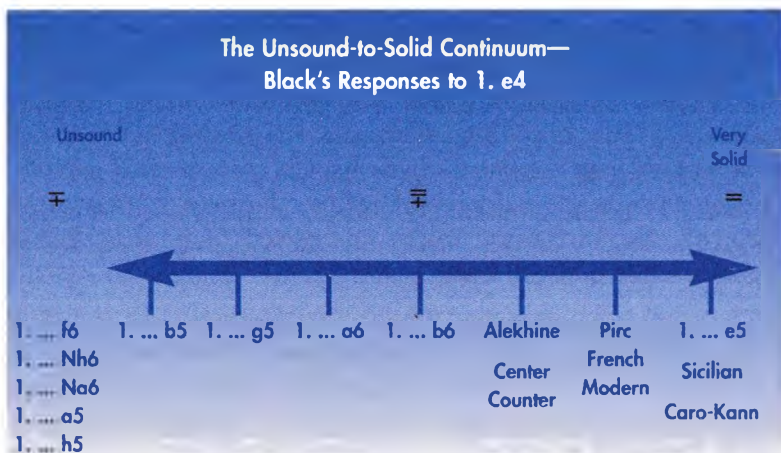
We offer below a few theoretical blueprints indicating the current status of some of the top contenders for your personal chess bodyguards. Remember, whether you’re checking out the prospects as Black or White, work your way down the tiers, investigating only your opponent’s main lines in each to see if you like the major seascape before wading into the back-eddies in the form of side variations. You’re guaranteed to have sufficient answers to the odd-ball lines.

The graphic below shows White’s first-move choices and their positions (roughly, and with a liberal dose of opinion) on a continuum of “Unsound” to “Very Solid.” The reasonable goal for White is an opening position evaluated as plus-over-equal (a small advantage for the first player). On the left, we can see that



White's worst first moves are in themselves only as bad as equal-over-plus (a small advantage for Black). White has more latitude.

The next graphic plots, on the same continuum, Black's first-move responses to 1. e4. You can see that Black's worst gets into more trouble than White's opening bad-boy pack. Black's faux-pas openers result in a plus-over-minus (a clear advantage for White). Black's opening goal is equality.



PETROSIAN'S PARADOX

To put theory into perspective, after 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5, it may take Black 25 moves to equalize. After 3. Bc4, it may take only 12. We've taken ourselves back to where we started, listening to Petrosian complain that when he studied openings for White, they were always equal, but when he studied for Black, they were always a bit worse.

Chapter 14

Summits & Cold War Combat

The Benko Gambit

For those too young to recall the Cold War clearly, the word “summit” doesn’t retrieve the same associations as the term calls up for your co-authors. Lev Alburt escaped from the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. He was a boy in Odessa during the 1956 Hungarian Revolt against Soviet rule—a time when many under the brutal Red thumb expected the U.S. to intervene on behalf of the brave Hungarian freedom fighters and thereby give a beacon-signal to other nations behind the “Iron Curtain” (an oxymoronic *mot just* first uttered by Winston Churchill in the small Missouri town of Moberly—just 30 miles from Lawrence’s college town). Lev and his friends drew secret maps of important Odessa-area installations, planning to provide their drawings to the rescuing American paratroopers, who never landed.

At the same time, Al Lawrence, in a Chicago-area elementary school adorned with oversize photos of liberator Dwight D. Eisenhower, learned how to “duck and cover”—to crouch under his flimsy school desk while the emergency alarm screeched at a volume that made young eyes water. Pavlovian angst was hard-

wired into millions of the first baby boomers. At the same time, the U.S. Army was holding “training” exercises in which hundreds of troops, sans any protective clothing, practiced charging into the blast-area of a just-exploded atom bomb. (For a highlight reel of postwar practices, rent the video documentary *Atomic Café*.) Meanwhile, their children were schooled in the details of the impending mutual destruction of the Cold War opponents. It was the Stars and Stripes against the Hammer and Sickle, and each had hundreds of deadly “ICBMs” (intercontinental ballistic missiles) permanently aimed at each other, enough to destroy their populations several times over, in a precarious balance known as “MAD”—mutually assured destruction.

“Summits,” on the other hand, were meetings between the most powerful national leaders, normally the American President and the Soviet General Secretary. These highest-level conferences provided a hypothetical chance to reach an agreement on at least “nonproliferation,” arresting the production of missiles, and averting what Harvard science professor and piano-playing satirist Tom Lehrer called a worldwide “roisserie”:

*Oh, we will all fry together when we fry.
We'll be french fried potatoes by and by.
There will be no more misery
When the world is our roisserie,
Yes, we will all fry together when we fry.*

(from “We Will All Go Together When We Go,” © Tom Lehrer, from the Album “An Evening Wasted with Tom Lehrer”)

In this context, “summit” became an often-used and sometimes metaphorical term, designating a meeting of a powerful representative who went head-to-head with his adversary to negotiate to the advantage of his own constituency. There were actual summits throughout the 45-year-long Cold War. Late in the period, in 1985, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev met in the first of their five summit conferences. In 1986, the two met in Reykjavik, Iceland, at the Horfdi House.

**ICELAND HAS TRADITIONALLY
BEEN KNOWN AS THE
NATION WITH THE
HIGHEST PERCENTAGE
OF CHESS PLAYERS ...**



CHESS SUMMITS IN ICELAND

The same year, Reykjavik hosted a Nordic countries versus U.S. match, in which Alburt participated. By 1990, the event grew to a true “summit” match between the U.S., England, the Nordic countries and the Soviet Union. Lawrence served as Team Captain for the U.S. Team.

Iceland has traditionally been known as the nation with the highest percentage of chess players to its general population. In 1972, it had hosted the Fischer-Spassky match. Indeed, the Chess Summits were held at the center that displayed the chess table and chairs (disassembled during the championship match in a search for mind-interfering devices) used in the Cold War championship.

In the following game, illustrative of the spirited competition that was the norm at these Reykjavik tournaments, GM Lev Alburt demonstrates a major line of his favorite Benko Gambit. Annotations are by Alburt. Evaluations in brackets refer to Alburt's SOPR (System of Predicted Results) 0-10 scale. (For more on SOPR, see chapter 18.)

JOHANN HJARTARSON—LEV ALBURT

Nordic Countries vs. U.S., Reykjavik, 1986

BENKO GAMBIT

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. cxb5

Black sacrifices a pawn for faster development, the initiative, and some long-lasting positional advantages that we'll discuss later. White can of course decline the gambit, at least temporarily, by 4. Nf3, 4. Qc2, 4. f3 or 4. a4. All of these moves are playable, but none of them promises White more than approxi-

mate equality (or at best a slight opening advantage), but then neither does the text move.

4. ... a6

Black's idea is to open the f1-a6 diagonal for his bishop and the a- and b-files for his rooks.

5. bxa6

Other good moves for White are 5. e3, 5. b6 (an idea of Roman Dzindzihashvili) and 5. Nc3.

5. ... g6

Why not 5. ... Bxa6? In fact, 5. ... Bxa6 is a good move, and usually leads to the same positions as 5. ... g6. The reason why I (and theory) suggest 5. ... g6 here is as follows: if White plays a rare system with the fianchetto of both his bishops (in this case the queen's knight does not go to c3, in order not to block the bishop on b2) Black's most efficient reply is to capture on a6 with his knight rather than his bishop, in order to play a later ... Nb4 with a double attack on the a2- and d5-pawns. This subtlety, however, is of no real importance, because Black has a good (equal) game even with his bishop (and not his knight) on a6.

6. Nc3 Bxa6

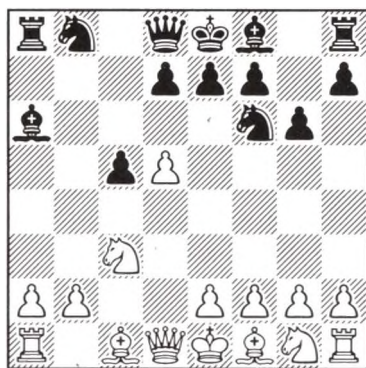


Diagram 33

Now this capture is a must; otherwise White plays e2-e4 with a

clear advantage. After 6. ... Bxa6 White has a choice: to play e2-e4 (as in the game) and lose some tempi on artificial castling, or to fianchetto his light-square bishop.

White could, of course, play 6. e3, but this loses at least one tempo, as he eventually has to play e3-e4—Black simply completes his development with 6. ... Bg7 and 7. ... 0-0, as he doesn't now have to worry about the otherwise possible e4-e5. Then Black plays ... Qb6 and takes on a6 with his bishop, in order (after Bxa6 by White) to recapture on a6 with his queen. In this line, Black captures on a6 with his bishop only after White's bishop on f1 moves, thereby gaining another tempo. The latter is easy to achieve, as Black has more useful moves than White before taking on a6, e.g ... d6 and ... Nbd7.

7. Nf3 d6 8. e4 Bxf1 9. Kxf1 Bg7 10. g3

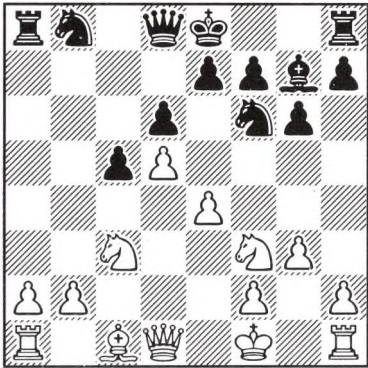


Diagram 34

On his 10th move White has to choose between faster development and a safer position for his king. He decides in favor of the

**GM LEV ALBURT DEMONSTRATES
A MAJOR LINE OF HIS
FAVORITE BENKO
GAMBIT.**



former, and plans to put his king on g2, where, however, it sometimes allows Black counterplay along the h1-a8 diagonal. Also, if White ever plays f2-f3 in order to protect his e4-pawn, his king on the second rank becomes exposed.

Therefore White often plays 10. h3 here, especially as this is a good move anyway (it prevents a Black knight from using the g4-square), and then his king goes to h2. But this maneuver takes three moves (one more than 10. g3 and 11. Kg2), and Black can use this extra tempo. Current theory considers these two variations (10. h3 and 10. g3) as equivalent; the evaluation of this position should be [5.0] or at most [5.3], something slightly below a normal opening advantage for White. In fact, which side you like to play here is very subjective, purely a matter of taste; I for instance, prefer Black.

10. ... 0-0 11. Kg2 Nbd7

Also good here is 11...Na6.

12. Re1 Qb6

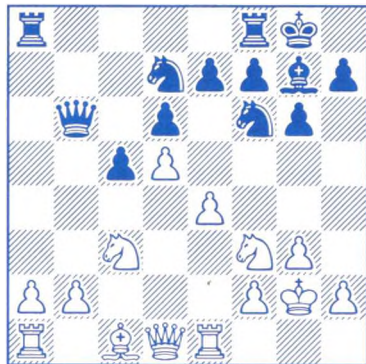


Diagram 35

My favorite, then and now. GM Alex Chernin, now one of the leading Benko experts, prefers 12. ... Qa5 (putting pressure on the knight at c3, thus stopping b2-b3).

We have reached a classic position of the Benko Gambit, popular 25-30 years ago and now back in tournament practice after

other, more ambitious White systems have proved ineffective. Black is a pawn down, but he has the following long-lasting factors as compensation: pressure along the a- and b-files, where his rooks cooperate effectively with his bishop at g7; control over two important diagonals (by the bishop and the queen on a6, which is where it goes), and, most importantly, a superior pawn structure, as all the Black pawns are connected in one huge “continent” whereas White has one smaller “continent” and one small vulnerable “island” (a2 and b2).

In the early 1970s White usually played 13. Qe2 here—until it was discovered that, paradoxically, Black could (and should) offer the exchange of queens by 13. ... Qa6. Paradoxically, because usually a side which sacrificed material tries to attack (and consequently, to avoid exchanges, especially the exchange of queens). But there are exceptions; here, incidentally, it is possible to explain in very logical terms why the exchange of queens is beneficial for Black.

Black is going to play on the queenside, and in some variations this may leave his kingside vulnerable. Indeed, along with a breakthrough in the center, an attack on the Black king is one of White's best options in the Benko, and it is much more promising than the hope of eventually using his extra pawn in some unspecified remote ending. And without the queens, this threat, this option (an attack) is taken away from White; moreover, in an ending Black can often play ... f7-f5, attacking the White center, a plan which is very double-edged and risky with the queens still on the board.

Those who—like Walter Browne and myself—first discovered that Black is equal or better in various Benko endings, and that he should strive for them rather than avoid them, scored pretty well with Black in the early seventies. Then this paradox became common knowledge, and players with White at last stopped regarding typical endings in the Benko Gambit as favorable!

By the way, the Benko Gambit is an excellent illustration of how openings should be studied—in close connection not only

with the middlegame, but also the endgame. “What am I trying to achieve?”—this was the question I asked myself when preparing to play the Benko Gambit. “Is a draw everything I want and can possibly get?” And only when I found out, after much analysis, that Black has good chances for a win even after exchanging his c-pawn for White's a- and b- pawns—something that will be discussed later—then and only then did I decide that this was an opening I could use as my main weapon, not only on the rare occasions when a draw was desirable.

13. Re2

White protects his b-pawn and prepares to develop his bishop.

13. ... Rfb8 14. h3 Qa6

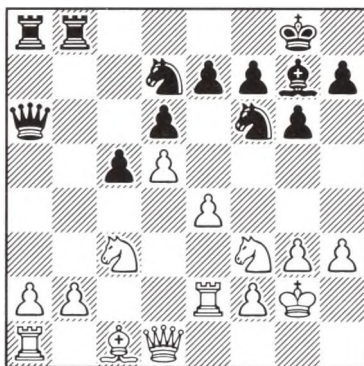


Diagram 36

Black's last move puts pressure on the White rook. Now this rook is well protected, but just wait for a few moves. Besides, Black plans to maneuver his knight to c4 via b6; were it not for 14. h3, another maneuver, ... Ng4-e5-d3 (or even ... Qd3) would also be possible.

15. Bg5

Preventing the knight on f6 from leaving this square. I thought for nearly 10 minutes over my reply.

15. ... h6

This move creates a comfortable post for my king at h7, but it also weakens the king's pawn screen, which is an important factor in the middlegame; also, in some variations the h6-pawn is underprotected. Still, give and take, this is the best move.

16. Be3

Instead, 16. Bf4 allows Black, at an appropriate moment, to open the diagonal for his bishop with gain of tempo (... Nh5), and also, in some (not very likely) circumstances, the further bishop hunt ... g6-g5 could be possible.

After the move in the game White stands clearly worse—[4.0] at best. So, both 16. Bf4 and even 16. Bc1 should be analyzed, but without any real hopes of equality (to say nothing of an advantage) for White. Thus 15. Bg5 looks like an error, but without it Black can play with impunity 15. ... Ne8 followed by 16. ... Nc7 and 17. ... Nb5, with a very comfortable game. Does this mean that the whole system chosen by White is toothless and does not promise him anything more than possible equality? It may.

16. ... Nb6

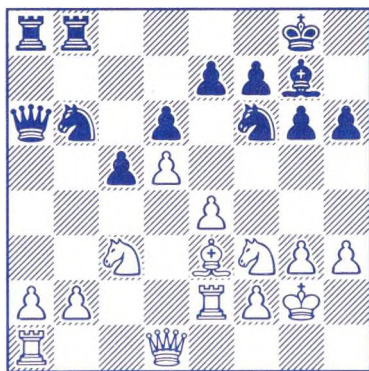


Diagram 37

This last, thematic move is possible only because the White rook on e2 is insufficiently defended: 17. e5 is refuted by 17. ... Nfxd5.

17. Rcl

Why not 17. b3?, depriving the Black knight of the important c4-square? First, I saw (before playing 16. ... Nb6) that after 17. ... Nxe4 18. Nxe4 Bxa1 19. Qxa1 Qxe2 20. Bxh6



Diagram 38
After 20. Bxh6

20. ... f6 21. Nxf6+! exf6 22. Qxf6 (all these moves are forced) 22. ... Ra7 (or 22. ... Rb7) White should (and could) draw by perpetual check. I continued my search, as I believed that Black should have more than a draw here, and because I didn't want to reject such an otherwise nice move as 16. ... Nb6. Eventually I found the winning move—17. ... Nfxd5! Now after 18. Nxd5 (other lines are also very much in Black's favor) 18: ... Nxd5 19. exd5 Bxa1 20. Qxa1 Qxe2 21. Bxh6 f6,

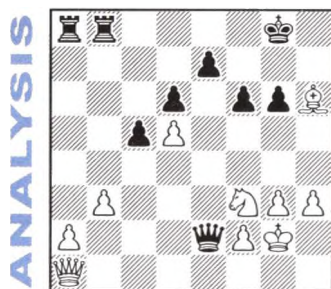


Diagram 39
After 21. ... f6

we obtain a position similar to the one reached after Black's 20th move in the previous variation, the only difference being that

there is no White knight on e4 (and no Black knight on b6). And this difference is vital, as White cannot now open up the Black king by sacrificing his e4-knight on f6, and he should lose, indeed he should resign.

17. ... Nc4!

This is stronger than 17. ... Na4, which allows White to equalize after 18. Nxa4 Qxa4 19. Qxa4 Rxa4 20. e5. But in order to be certain that Black is better, I had to foresee and evaluate correctly the position six moves ahead, after 23. ... Nc5 (as in the game).

18. b3 Nxe3+ 19. Rxe3 Nd7

Opening the diagonal for the bishop. Note that, were it not for the Black pawn on h6, 19. ... Bh6 would win.

20. a4

White is ready to block the queenside by 21. Nb5 followed by 22. Nd2. Black's reply is a must.

20. ... c4! 21. Nb5

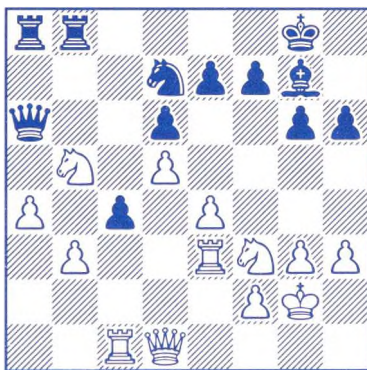


Diagram 40

This looks very attractive because of the double threat: to recapture on c4 with the rook and to win the Exchange after Nc7. Another possible move is 21. bxc4, which leads to a substantial positional advantage for Black. He eventually wins the a-pawn and exerts strong pressure on the e-pawn; besides, the White king

is not as safe as Black's. But the various endings—virtually all of them—also do not promise White much hope of an easy draw here.

As mentioned above, I have analyzed these types of endings, with a 5-versus-5 pawn structure, in great detail—as far as rook versus rook endings, and sometimes even as far as pawn endings, and I have discovered that Black often has good winning chances. Usually, the more pieces left on the board, the more difficult the job facing White. On my SOPR scale, I would evaluate the position after 21. bxc4 as [2.5], with a predicted result of 5 wins for Black and 5 draws out of ten games. White's 21st move, 21. Nb5, changes this evaluation further in Black's favor: [2.0], but with a sharper distribution of possible results: seven wins for Black, two draws, but also—one win for White.

21. ... cxb3! 22. Nc7 Qxa4 23. Nxa8

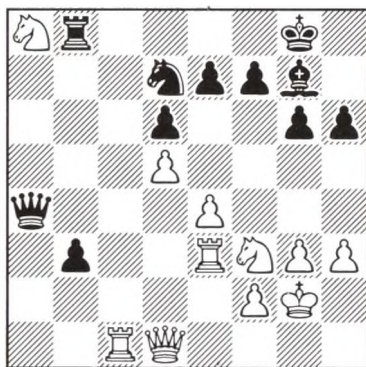


Diagram 41

23. ... Nc5



**WHITE'S 21ST MOVE,
21. Nb5, CHANGES THIS
EVALUATION FURTHER
IN BLACK'S FAVOR.**

**AFTER THIS DISCOVERY
I CHECKED AGAIN MY
PLANNED 23. ... Nc5,
AND MADE IT WITH
GREAT CONFIDENCE.**



Another alternative, which I considered before making my 17th move as well as after White's 23rd, is 23. ... b2. At first I thought that after 24. Qxa4 bxc1=Q 25. Qxd7 Rxa8 26. Qxe7 Ra2

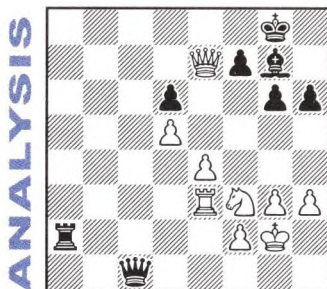


Diagram 42
After 26. ... Ra2

(threatening to take the White rook) 27. Re1 Qb2 28. Rf1, Black could play for a win without any risk of losing. Still, I thought that my winning chances here would be poorer than after another move planned in advance, 23. ... Nc5. Then, however, I found that White could obtain better chances after 23. ... b2? with 24. Rc8+! Rxc8 25. Qxa4 b1=Q 26. Qxd7 Rxa8 27. Qxe7. The difference between this and the previous variation is that the Black queen is at b1 instead of c1, and because of this, 27. ... Ra2 does not gain a tempo.

After this discovery, I checked my planned 23. ... Nc5 again, and made it with great confidence.

Now ... b3-b2 is a serious threat, and thus 24. Nc7 does not promise White anything. But otherwise Black threatens to capture the knight on a8, and with a pawn (but what a pawn!) for the

Exchange, he should win the game without great trouble. White found the best reply.

24. Rxc5! dxc5 25. Nc7 c4!

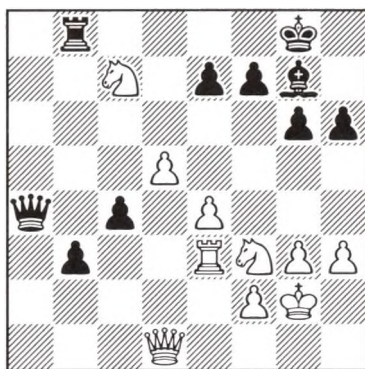


Diagram 43

On 25. ... Qa5? White happily gives back the piece: 26. Rxb3 Rxb3 27. Qxb3 Qxc7 28. Nd2, with a good game. Black prefers, correctly, to preserve his two connected pawns, rather than to regain the piece.

26. e5!

White cuts off the Black bishop from the queenside, and simultaneously prepares to create his own passed pawn.

26. ... Qa5 27. d6 b2!



The Cold War heats up: co-author Lawrence (right) in Vietnam, 1969.

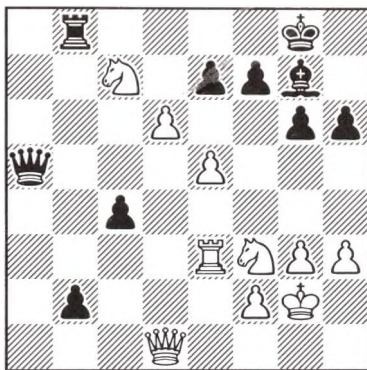


Diagram 44

If 27. ... c3, then White's attack after 28. dxe7 could become very dangerous, e.g. 28. ... c2 29. Qd8+ Rxd8 30. exd8=Q+ Kh7 31. Rxb3 c1=Q 32. Rb8, or 28. ... Qxc7 29. Qd6 Qc8 30. Rxc3. The text move 27. ... b2 creates an immediate threat (of queen-ing), but it also separates the passed pawns, and allows White to stop them by blockade.

28. Qb1?!

White's best try is 28. Nd2 c3 (28...exd6!?) 29. Nb1 (29. Nc4 Qc5) 29. ... Bxe5 30. Nd5 exd6 31. Ndxc3 Rc8.

**BLACK PREFERS,
CORRECTLY, TO PRESERVE
HIS TWO CONNECTED
PAWNS, RATHER THAN
TO REGAIN THE PIECE.**



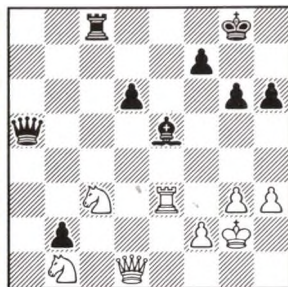


Diagram 45
After 31. ... Rc8

Black is much better, but White's defenses aren't yet exhausted.

28. ... c3 29. e6

This attack should fail, but other attempts to escape are also futile, e.g. 29. Nd4 exd6 or 29. Ne1 Bxe5.

29. ... fxe6 30. Re1

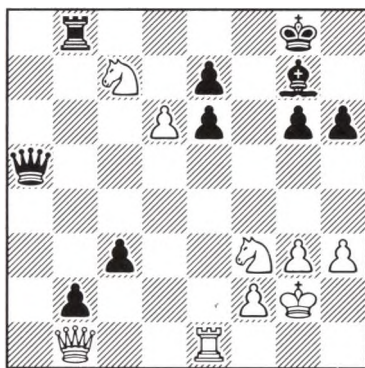


Diagram 46

30. ... exd6?!

Black's desire to eliminate the White d-pawn, so dangerous just recently, is psychologically fully understandable, but these exchange only prolongs the fight. The superior 30. ... Qf5 wins immediately.

31. Nxe6 Qf5 32. Ned4

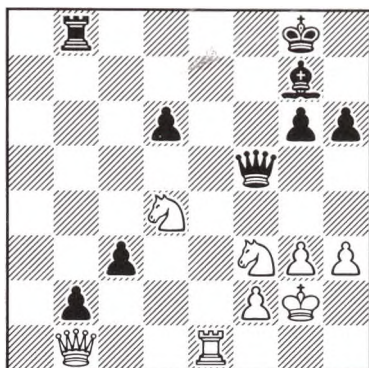


Diagram 47

I overlooked this move, which takes control of c2-square. Otherwise, I would certainly have played 30. ... Qf5. Still, Black should win.

32. ... Qxb1 33. Rxb1 Re8 34. Kf1

If 34. Nc2, Black continues 34. ... Re2 35. Nfe1 d5 36. Kf1 Rd2, and the three connected passed pawns should eventually break through White's blockade and win.

34. ... Bxd4!

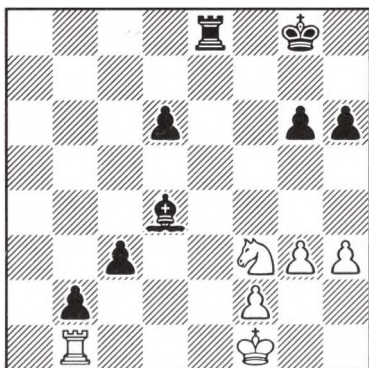


Diagram 48

Now White was threatening an effective blockade: Nc2 and Nfe1-d3. Therefore Black gives up the bishop, which has become less important with his passed pawns also on dark squares.

35. Nxd4 Re5 36. Kg2 Re4 37. Nc2 Kf7 38. Kf3 Re5 39. h4 Kf6

In time pressure, Black tries to reach the control at move 40.

40. Rd1 Ke6 41. g4 Rd5 42. Re1+ Kd7

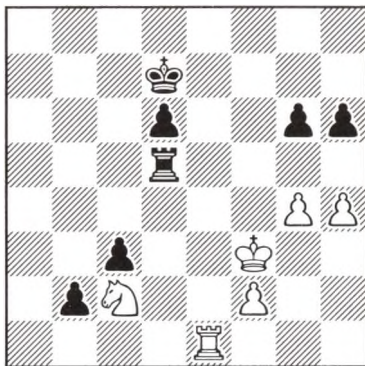


Diagram 49

Black's king goes to support his passed pawns. It's over.

43. Na3 Rd3+ 44. Ke4 Rd2 45. f4 c2 46. Nxc2 Rxc2

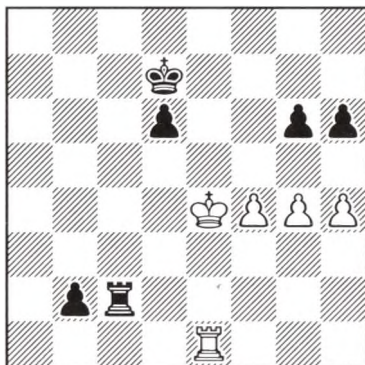


Diagram 50

This rook ending is an easy win for Black.

47. Rb1 Ke6 48. h5 gxh5 49. gxh5 Kf6 50. Kd5 Kf5 51. Kxd6 Kxf4, White resigns.

Chapter 15

Picture Yourself in the U.S. Championship

Playing Openings You'd Never Used Before!

Our chapter tells the story of what is perhaps a unique occurrence in the annals of off-the-board oddities. It's the behind-the-scenes record of how the 1990 U.S. Championship was won by a competitor who played moves he'd never tried out before, after only a few hours on-site with a friend who somehow talked him into this apparent madness!

Who were these men? Well, the competitor was co-author Lev Alburt, who, as you may know, prefers to stick unflappably to his favorite openings. His friend was a fellow former Russian. Was he the reincarnation of Rasputin, mesmerizing Lev into such uncharacteristic experiments? No, but, although he doesn't claim to be, he may well qualify as a true chess prophet.

The story holds an invaluable lesson or two, and gives us a chance to draw your attention to a new and, we feel, a very unusual book, co-written by the Svengali in question. He is GM Alex Chernin. He was born in Karkhov, Ukraine, in 1960 and began playing chess in 1971, proving himself to be a prodigy. In 1977 he took second place in the Soviet Junior championship, right



*Grandmaster Alex Chernin during a stay
with Daphne and Al Lawrence
while writing Pirc Alert!*

behind a promising youngster named Garry Kasparov. Second place in the 1979 World Junior Championship followed, and then many successes as an adult, including the prestigious overall USSR Championship in 1985. In addition to his career as a player, he served as trainer for a number of the world's best—GMs Alex Beliavsky, Boris Gelfand, Mikhail Gurevich, Joel Lautier, and others. His work has rendered important new theory in the Slav,

Semi Slav, Gruenfeld, Benoni, and of course, the Pirc Defense. Alex moved to Budapest in 1991 and lives there happily with his wife, young son and his doted-on family cat. Alex speaks fluent English and is an extraordinarily thoughtful person, who gives you straight answers in a soft-spoken voice. He's quick with an engaging, empathetic smile and a ready sense of humor.

Let's take a look first at the book, which really got its start during the strange circumstances of 1990.

NOTHING HELD BACK

The public loves competitors who don't hold back, whatever the sport. If we're boxing fans, we love Felix Trinidad and Fernando Vargas throwing leather from all angles and dragging themselves up from each knockdown to belt the other guy again and smile. We root for the marathoner who breaks the tape mere inches ahead of his rival and falls head-first into his coach's arms. On the chessboard, we love a Marshall who pitches everything he has at the opposition, sometimes, magically, to have left only the two pieces executing mate.

On the other hand, we've come to expect that world-class GMs like Alex, at the top of their game, may write very good books, but will keep secret TNs (theoretical novelties)—those game-winning aces of the opening—up their sleeves and off the pages. After all, they have sweaty-palm-equity in those unearthed treasures. And other GMs, perhaps preparing for a world championship match, hire such opening specialists for big fees, expecting to get moves not previously doled out to every amateur with a copy of the right paperback.

A TELL-ALL OPENING BOOK

But now along comes a book—*Pirc Alert!*—by world championship-candidate and leading Pirc theoretician Chernin. This one breaks the rules—it holds nothing back. (It's a volume your co-authors know well because we worked with Alex on preparing it. The theory within the book is overwhelmingly Chernin's, however, from his own notebooks.) He shares every tasty new creation from his home cooking. And he's whipped up plenty during 20 years of playing the dynamic Pirc against the world's best.

TNS FROM THE STARTING GUN

Alex is certainly an idea-man. You might think everything within the first few moves in a popular opening has been, like the Florida ballots, counted and re-counted by machines—and even held up to the light to reveal any holes. Alex finds brand-new ideas, amazingly enough, in territory you'd think would have been thoroughly mapped. Selecting almost randomly from the many TNs in the new book, let's look at two examples of Chernin's discoveries in what should be the very well charted waters of the first dozen moves.

In this first example, he finds a TN for White—and tells us how to avoid it as Black! Now that's putting it all out there!

1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. Bg5 Bg7 5. f4 h6 6. Bh4 c5 7. e5 Nh5 8. dxc5 Nxf4 9. exd6 g5 10. Bf2

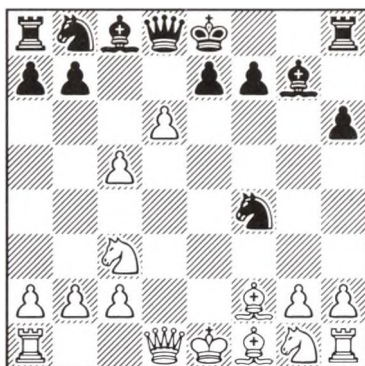


Diagram 51

In this wild position, **10. ... 0-0** is generally considered by theory to be okay. However, Alex found that after Black castles, White has the strong TN:

11. Bd4, e.g.—11. ... Bxd4 12. Qxd4 Nc6 13. Qd2 exd6 14. cxd6 Bg4

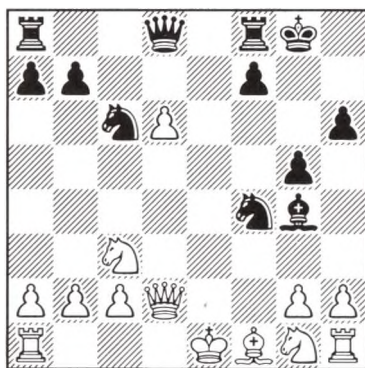


Diagram 52

Now **15. Nge2** and **0-0-0** is dangerous for Black.

But by playing **10. ... Nc6**, Black precludes this variation. An important nuance overlooked by hundreds of GMs scrutinizing the first ten moves over and over and over and over ...

Here's a Chernin TN for Black. The Pirc offers great flexibility, often allowing a defender to choose from several kinds of mid-game plans, as in the following position, which arose in the 1996 U.S. Championship game between GMs Alexander Yermolinsky and Boris Gulko.

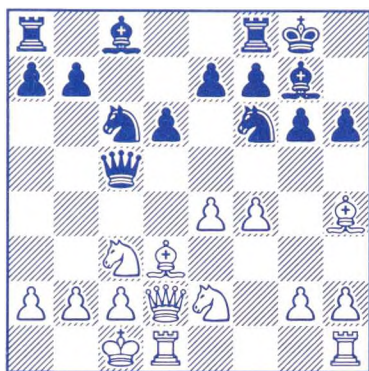


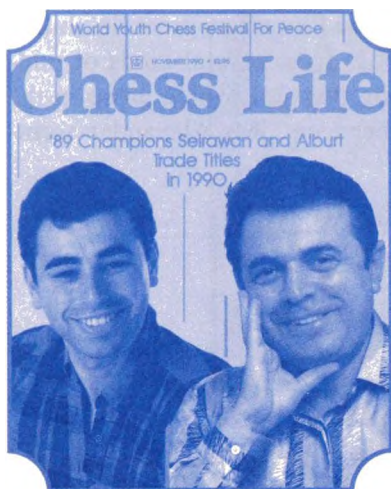
Diagram 53

Here Gulko played **11. ... Nb4** and eventually lost. The move, Chernin points out, seems untimely because the exchange ... Nb4xd3 only strengthens White's game after cxd3. Alex explains that Black can play the more logical 11. ... a6 and 12. ... b5 or 11. ... Be6, with double-edged play. Both sides seek to organize an attack against the opponent's king.

However, if he wants to accelerate his attack, Black can use another of Alex's TNs, the pawn sacrifice 11. ... b5, which appears very promising. You really couldn't blame Chernin if he had saved this one for his own game with the "Yerminator," but Alex has pledged to tell all in *Pirc Alert!*.

CHERNIN, ALBURT AND THE 1990 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP

The story of Albur's discovery of Chernin's singular genius for teaching opening ideas in a very short period of time—as well as his talent for finding overlooked opening fireworks—began in the strange circumstances we mentioned at the top of this chapter. The story may seem like fiction, but it is true. It may appear at



Chess Life cover- GMs Yasser Seirawan (left) and Lev Alburt on the cover of the 1990 November Chess Life magazine. They had “castled” titles from 1989.

first that it’s about Lev Alburt, since it’s a personal experience narrative. (Actually, both your co-authors were present during these events, Alburt as a participant in the U.S. Championship and Lawrence, then Executive Director of the U.S. Chess Federation and advocate of the tournament’s new format.) But the story is really about Alex and his truly amazing teaching abilities—and how he can in a very short period of time impart both specific and general opening knowledge on a very high level to both masters and non-masters.

August of 1990 found Lev in Jacksonville, Florida, hoping to win his third U.S. Invitational Championship in seven years. The competition, as well as the format, was brutal. Sixteen of America’s toughest GMs—including Joel Benjamin, six-time champ Walter Browne, Larry Christiansen, Nick de Firmian, Max Dlugy, Roman Dzindzichashvili, Boris Gulko and Yasser Seirawan—all nurtured their own hopes.

The tournament was the first-ever knockout championship (structured similarly to a tennis tournament). It was held concurrently with the U.S. Open—a Swiss tournament contested by hundreds of players of all strengths. The U.S. Invitational hopefuls faced each other in matches of two games, each at a time control of 40 moves in two hours, with sudden-death game tiebreakers. Losers were out but could enter the U.S. Open. (Alburt had won the U.S. Open in 1987 and again in 1989, but this year he hoped not to have a chance!) The last two left “standing” in the championship would play a final match of four games.

Alburt's first match against 1989 co-champion Yasser Seirawan went better than Lev could have hoped. He won both games, and so advanced. (Yaz went on to win the U.S. Open; in effect, when the clocks stopped ticking, the two had "castled" from their 1989 positions. See photo.) In the second match, Lev's toughest, he squeaked by Maxim Dlugy in a tiebreak blitz game. Max had just been elected president of the United States Chess Federation, and the USCF annual convention is always held at the U.S. Open. So the organizational demands on Max were extremely distracting. Alburt still had to get by de Firmian and then the winner of the Dzindzi-Christiansen match-up. The U.S. Championship is not easy to win!

IT'S ONLY THE U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP—PLAY A VARIATION YOU'VE NEVER TRIED BEFORE!

Enter Alex Chernin, who was doing quite well in the U.S. Open. Alburt knew Alex's reputation as a brilliant opening theoretician and as a top-echelon GM. They had been good friends for years. Like Chernin, Lev is originally from Ukraine. In talking shop at the hosting hotel, Alex gave Alburt some advice about playing Nick. He said that de Firmian, like Lev himself, nearly always plays the same variations. Since Nick had Black the first game, it was predictable that, against Lev's 1. d4, he would undoubtedly play the Modern Benoni and count on Lev's religious response, the g3 system. Alex recommended surprising Nick by putting White's light-square bishop on d3.

Lev was skeptical. He'd always stuck to playing the opening variations he thought were best or at least best for him. Ironically, Alburt was one of the last players who would be comfortable with trying suddenly to learn a new variation for a championship contest. It was a waste of time and energy even to consider, Lev thought. But Alex pestered and ultimately prevailed. Lev agreed to give his friend just fifteen minutes.

Alex's explanations were so concise, his logic and focus so clear, and his ideas so strong that, in spite of himself, Lev had to admit he was very interested. The two wound up spending about

two hours on a system Lev had never in his life played, and he had to admit he felt well prepared! In fact, Lev went on to achieve an overwhelming game in his first match-up against de Firmian—without making a single move on his own. Give him such a position against anyone and he had better win! He did. (Later, *Chess Informant 51* even awarded his opening sequence in this game the “Best Theoretical Novelty,” which was accompanied by a cash prize. There had been stiff competition—brilliant games by both Kasparov and Karpov, for example.)

THAT WORKED. NOW USE AN ENTIRE OPENING YOU’VE NEVER PLAYED BEFORE!

Alex, now acting as Lev’s part-time second, was relentless regarding game two against de Firmian. Why should Lev play his predictable Alekhine, he reasoned, wandering into whatever Nick is cooking up? So now Lev was to ride into battle under the banner of a complex opening, the Pirc, that he’d never played in his life.

They expected Nick to follow his routine of responding to the Pirc with the Austrian Attack. Chernin had enough ammo to load Lev for bear in this variation. After the success of the first game, Lev was very understandably inclined to listen to Alex, who did not have to plead for 15 minutes this time. He showed Lev the ideas and basic moves of the variations they wanted in the Austrian. He thoroughly convinced Alburt of the correctness of the ideas. Then he showed Lev other White lines—in case Nick would deviate from the usual paths. Very importantly, as it turned out, Alex showed Alburt a move for Black, an interesting sacrificial idea—giving up the Exchange for a pawn—in one of the main lines. (Giving up the “Exchange”—with a capital—“E” means trading a rook for a minor piece—a bishop or knight.)

Nick played exactly as Alex said he would. Lev got a good game, but then Nick outplayed him a bit. After 16 moves, Alburt was on move in the following double-edged position.

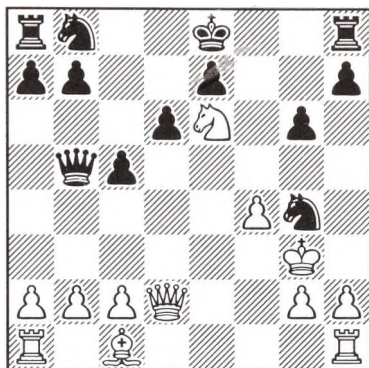


Diagram 54

DE FIRMIAN—ALBURT

U.S. Championship

JACKSONVILLE, 1990

The game continued 16. ... Qd7 17. Re1 Nh6 18. b3! Nc6 19. Bb2 Nf5+ 20. Kf2 Nfd4 21. Kg1!

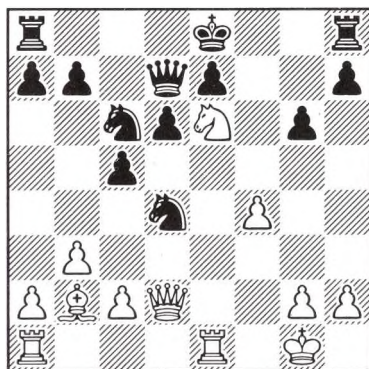


Diagram 55

21. ... Nxe6!

Alex had drawn Lev's attention to this Exchange-sacrifice idea during their brief training session.

22. Bxh8

Black castled long, and White had the smallest of advantages. Lev was confident that he could hold the game. In fact, although

Nick played very creatively in trying to win and therefore pull even in the match, Lev, on his 52nd move, was able to reach this intriguing formation.

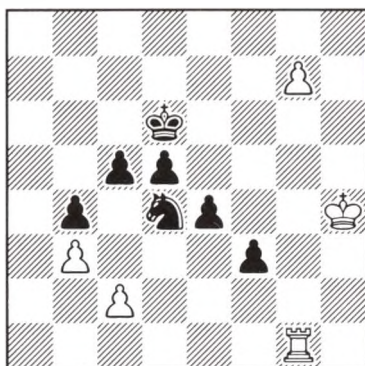


Diagram 56
After 52. g7

Here Lev forced a draw by giving up his last piece and following up by abandoning all save one of the rest of his men! This seems like a bit of GM magic, and it is, but this is an idea we can all understand at its heart.

**TAKE A PAGE FROM THE BUSINESS
SELF-HELP TEXTS, TRY
“SUCCESS-IMAGING” IN CHESS**

We’ve all heard plenty about imaging your success in an upcoming meeting or project, creating a kind of mental holograph that we take with us. Well, the idea is nothing new in chess. As the great world champion José Capablanca, the first inductee into the

**WE’VE ALL HEARD
PLENTY ABOUT IMAGING
YOUR SUCCESS IN AN
UPCOMING MEETING OR
PROJECT, CREATING A KIND OF
MENTAL HOLOGRAPH THAT WE TAKE
WITH US. WELL, THE IDEA IS NOTHING
NEW IN CHESS.**

new World Chess Hall of Fame in Miami, encouraged us to do in an endgame, let's look ahead to imagine our "ideal" position. Then the path to this rainbow's end may seem quite clear. Lev's idea is to get a position like this one:

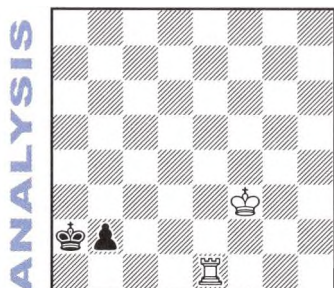


Diagram 57

Ideal position

In your own analysis, try to stop him and see if you can get an outcome any better than de Firmian's!

Back to the previous diagram ...

52. ... Nf5+ 53. Kh3 Nxg7 54. Rxg7 Ke5 55. Kg3 Kd4 56. Rd7 Kc3

Black begins to give away pawns while clearing the path for the one that will die royalty—the b-pawn!

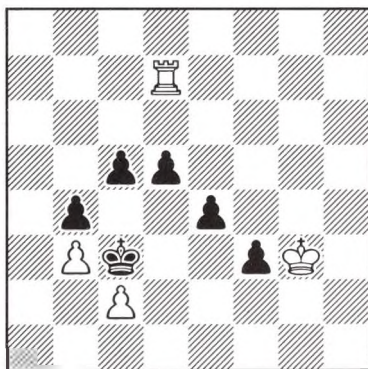


Diagram 58

57. Rxd5 Kxc2 58. Rxc5+ Kxb3 59. Kf2 Ka4 60. Rc4 Ka3

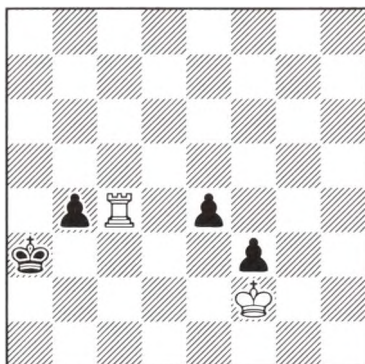


Diagram 59

61. Rxe4 b3 62. Re1 b2 63. Kxf3 Ka2 64. Ke2 b1=Q 65. Rxb1 Kxb1

The pot of gold. Well, even Nick had to call the game a draw at this point. The first real chess mentor of co-author Al Lawrence was the colorful, no-holds-barred attacker and local champion, Jack Winters of Kansas City, Missouri. As Jack remarked after one of his very promising Evans Gambits reduced itself to such a position, “It’s hard to combine with the lone king.”

THE STUDENT CHANGES THEORY AFTER HIS FIRST GAME IN THE PIRC.

Can a student come up with TNs of his own? Of course he can—especially when Chernin is the trainer, and he emphasizes ideas. Let’s go back to Black’s 16th move of the de Firmian-Alburt game, just before 16. ... Qd7.

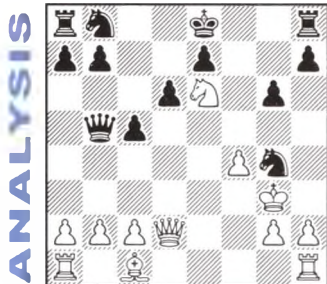


Diagram 60
Before 16. ... Qd7

Look at the possibility Lev showed Alex, 16. ... Na6!!

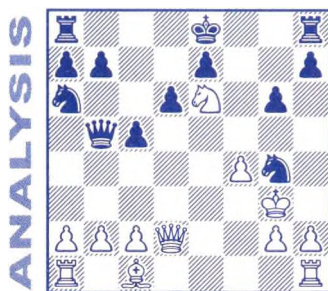


Diagram 61
After 16. ... Na6!!

This move changed the theoretical assessment of the position! The tactical basis is 17. Kxg4 Qd7 (pinning White's "extra" knight to his exposed king) 18. Re1 Nc7 19. Qe2 Kf7 20. f5 gxf5+ 21. Kxf5 Rag8, followed by ... Rg6-+.

Five years later (you can see how practitioners normally horde their secrets!), Alex had a chance to test Lev's idea—on de Firmian himself! Nick chose not to expose his king to the deadly pin on the c8-h3 diagonal. The game went:

17. Re1 Nh6

What would Siegbert "knights-on-the-rim-are-grim" Tarrasch have said about the position of Black's knights?! (if 17. ... h5, 18. f5!±)

18. b3 Nf5+ 19. Kf2 h5 20. Bb2

(20. Ng7+ Nxg7 21. Qxd6 0-0 -+).

20. ... Rg8 21. Rad1 Kd7 22. c4

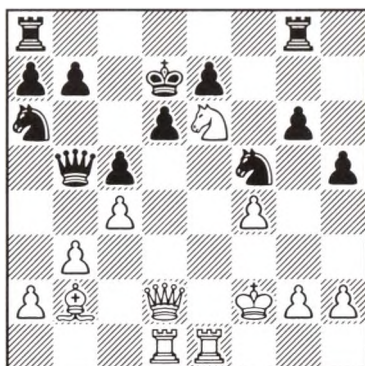


Diagram 62

Here Alex agreed to a draw—too early. With 22. ... Qc6, he could consolidate. If 23. Qa5 Rae8 24. b4 cxb4 25. c5, then 25. ... Nh4, with its deadly threat to g2, wins immediately. Otherwise, Black is simply better because of his healthy extra pawn.

WORTH HIS WEIGHT IN RATING POINTS

So Lev won the match with de Firmian, all the while playing new opening moves, and after only a few hours of coaching from Alex. As a trainer, Chernin is obviously worth his weight in rating points. The title match was a four-game head-to-head with Christiansen, who had reached the finals without losing a game! Larry was especially strong while on the attack, and very flexible in his openings. With some help from Alex, Alburt won a wild first game as Black in his own Alekhine's Defense. In the second game, Lev played his trusty Catalan and won after many ups and downs.

LEARNING TO FISH AND CATCHING THE SHARKS!

So one more half-point would earn Lev Alburt the championship. Alburt and Chernin expected Larry this time to start with 1. d4, which Lev intended to counter with his usual Benko Gambit. By now you can guess—Alex had another idea. You need only a draw, he told Lev, so why give away a pawn on move 3? Now it took Alex very little time to convince Lev. In a few hours,

Alex took him through the Slav Defense, showing what to do in all the main lines. Once again, despite the short time, the brilliance of Chernin's own understanding and his clear, concise, reassuring way of explaining moves and ideas gave Lev both knowledge and confidence. Sure enough, Larry played a sideline. Here's how it went:

CHRISTIANSEN—ALBURT

Jacksonville, 1990

SLAV DEFENSE

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. c4 c6 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. a4 Bf5

Here's where Christiansen varied from the main line with **6. Nh4?!.** Normal is 6. e3 or 6. Ne5.

Alex and Lev hadn't discussed this move specifically. Not every move can be anticipated in training, and even if it could, who can remember so much? Lev was playing an opening that he had never before ventured. So Larry made a practical, professional decision. He wanted to take Alburton out of his "prep," leaving him cast away in uncharted, unfamiliar waters. Lev didn't, however, feel at all confused or at sea, as he would if Alex had simply crammed his head with tricky lines. On the contrary, Alex had explained the important ideas of the opening to him so well, that in reaction to Larry's unusual approach, Lev was actually able to create what is now the approved theoretical prescription for dealing with Larry's sideline!

As the old saying goes, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and he can feed himself the rest of his life." After only a brief lesson by Alex, Lev was fishing—and catching the biggest sharks!

First Lev thought about retreating his attacked bishop to its home square. White could then return his knight to f3, when Alburton could put his light-square bishop back on f5 again. But then White might make a different, better choice. Why give him that option? Wouldn't it be better to make him live with his

knight-on-the-rim variation? There must be a good reason his sixth move is not a main line for White.

A typical reaction to 6. Nh4 is 6. ... Bg6, in order after 7. Nxg6 to recapture toward the center and at the same time to open the h-file. But there's another "candidate move."

6. ... e6!

Alex had shown Lev this move in a similar position. Yes, it invites a doubled pawn, but look at some of what it accomplishes:

6. ... e6! guards the attacked bishop while forwarding development; it opens diagonals for Black's queen and dark-square bishop; if White captures, doubling the pawns, the Black pawn on f5 supports the e4-outpost for Black's knight, which can also be further supported by a rook on e8. Christiansen did capture the bishop.

7. Nxf5 exf5 8. e3

And on move eight, Lev played what happened to be a novelty (again based on Alex's ideas).

8. ... Bb4

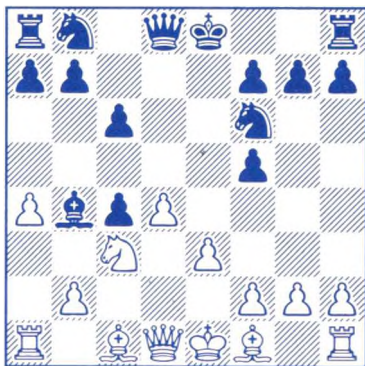


Diagram 63

Alburt achieved comfortable equality and eventually won, capturing the title 3-0 in the final.

MOVES THAT ATTRACT ATTENTION FROM THE WORLD CHAMPION

Later, in a discussion with Garry Kasparov, the world champion made it clear to Lev that this last game had been brought to his attention. Garry wanted to know who had told Lev about the improvement in the 6...e6! line, a novelty also discovered by his own high-powered analytical team. Lev couldn't blame Garry for being curious—after all, an important eighth-move TN doesn't come along everyday! Alburt was amused to tell the champ that he found the move 6. ... e6! over the board in 10 minutes and its follow-up (8. ... Bb4) in another five minutes—after “studying” the opening for only a few hours the evening before the game. Of course, after having the pleasure of such a shocking deflation, Lev told him about Alex Chernin's special skills.

Chernin left an indelible impression on Lev. Alburt had never seen such an ability to understand the fundamental, recurring ideas of an opening coupled with the ability to convey this understanding in a fast, confidence-inspiring way.

In the next chapter, we'll show you what happened when Alburt invited Alex to New York to try out Chernin's approach on Alburt's students—to find out if the trainer's methods would help non-championship contenders. You'll see that he fashioned for them an opening discovery that took five years for the rest of the world to figure out!

*May 1984:
Lev Alburt
lectures at the
famous, and
now defunct,
Manhattan
Chess Club in
New York City.*





Above: 1983 U.S. Championship—Lev Alburt is seated at far left. To his immediate left are Roman Dzindichashvili and Larry Christiansen.

Right: Lev Alburt winds up a simultaneous exhibition (in which a master takes on many amateur players at the same time).



Above: Walter Browne versus Lev Alburt.

Right: Lev Alburt and Garry Kasparov play blitz (speed chess) at the home of well-known writer Charles Krauthammer (seated at left).



Chapter 16

The Alex Files

Tomorrow's Theory Today

It's mankind's recurring dream, subject of speculation in one way or another from ancient auguries to "Twilight Zone" episodes—if we could only get tomorrow's newspaper (or at least its headlines) today! We wouldn't have to be a brilliant financier to make our killing in the market. We needn't have great horse-sense to pick the ponies, nor political savvy to back the right mayor.

Well, sorry to keep coming back to the 64 squares, but what about getting a secret heads-up on tomorrow's theoretical novelities (TNs), the exact locations and detonators of the unearthed landmines of the chess openings? Even if the merely mortal couldn't really become world champ with them, we could have a great time down at the club bowling the local kingpin right into the gutter.

**KASPAROV CALLING ... WHO TOLD YOU
ABOUT MY SECRET MOVE?**

We told the story of how co-author Lev Alburt won the 1990 U.S. Championship while playing openings that he had studied

**OF COURSE,
LEV THOUGHT OF ALEX.
“CAN YOU TEACH
MY STUDENT A SOLID
SYSTEM AGAINST 1. e4
IN ONE HOUR?”**

for only a few hours, immediately before the games—but with GM Alex Chernin as his trainer. Chernin not only provided numerous TNs, but also showed an almost supernatural ability to explain ideas and themes so concisely and clearly that Lev was able to create new theory of his own.

After his own experiences, Lev was eager to find out if Chernin’s magic would work on those below GM level.

LEV’S STUDENTS AND ALEX

After the 1990 Championship in Jacksonville, Lev headed back to New York, where his students ranged from beginners to masters. He invited Alex to join him. One of Alburt’s students, a class-B player, was an especially busy man, the CEO of a leading national investment firm. He felt that he needed an opening he could understand quickly and play with confidence. Of course, Lev thought of Alex. “Can you teach my student a solid system against 1. e4 in one hour?” Lev asked Alex just before the lesson.

“I can do it in thirty minutes,” Alex said calmly, unwittingly playing a strange variation of the American television game show “Name that Tune.” Lev was very curious to see how this session would turn out. Chernin had picked out the Rubinstein French, an unfashionable line that relies on the same third move, after 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5, regardless of whether White chooses 3. Nc3 or 3. Nd2. Black plays 3. ... dxe4, and responds to 4. Nxe4 with 4. ... Bd7.

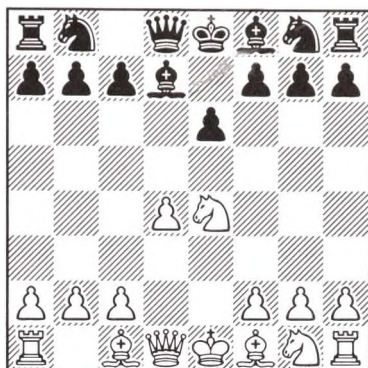


Diagram 64

Lev watched Alex adapt himself perfectly to the needs of this particular student. Alex showed him the ideas and moves of the main line, which led to an almost equal position. Then he circled back to demonstrate how players of White typically go wrong, overreaching in the center and leaving their d-pawn vulnerable. He explained how to take advantage of that mistake.

“Time!” Lev thought to himself as he glanced at his watch. Alex smiled and looked up at the CEO, who had now been transformed into that most focused of humans, the chess player at the moment of enlightenment. Lev’s student was delighted to spend another half-hour trying different side variations and asking Alex questions.

Chernin’s telephone lesson with another of Lev’s over-committed students, a C-player and a best-selling writer on nutrition, followed the same sequence of events. Both players were thrilled with the results of their opening. Each became something of an expert in the line, and found themselves able to battle successfully players (or computers) several hundred rating points above them. Clearly, Alex’s magic touch worked on non-masters as well as someone battling for the U.S. championship.

Then-current theory held that the Rubinstein variation left Black with a significant disadvantage. What Alex achieved was every chess player’s and every chess theoretician’s dream—he

drastically changed the evaluation of a key opening position from a clear edge for White to approximate equality.

Thus it was not merely that Lev's students' opponents wouldn't find the right moves, although they probably wouldn't. The truth was that the moves and ideas Alex had worked out practically equalized!

THE ALEX FILES—FUTURE THEORY

Five years later, in 1995, Alex came back to New York. Albur's students were eager to see him. Indeed, they were still playing his line in the Rubinstein French. But something had changed. In fact, new opening books now recanted earlier pronouncements on the variation, and Alex's line became quite popular with the likes of Anatoly Karpov. Theory had finally caught up with Chernin, at least regarding the Rubinstein. The students were quite impressed that, just as Alex told them five years earlier, his ideas and moves were now given in books as the way to fight for equality in this variation! Alex's theoretical ideas are like magic time capsules that contain the truth that will be dug up years in the future. Top players such as Gelfand, Beliavsky and Lautier know and rely on Alex's genius for seeing into the theoretical future. Beliavsky says it succinctly enough: "Alex's files show theory as it *will* be in 10 years!"

PRACTICING WHAT HE PREACHES AND MAKING IT LOOK EASY

Here's a game in which Alex handles the Black pieces in his beloved Pirc against our three-time U.S. champion, Joel Benjamin.



**CHERNIN DEPLOYS
A PLAN HE CALLS
OPERATION ENTER
THE DRAGON, AFTER THE
FINAL FILM FROM ... BRUCE LEE.**

BENJAMIN—CHERNIN

Buenos Aires, 1992

PIRC DEFENSE

1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. Be2

In the upcoming line, this modest-appearing move is a wolf in sheep's clothing, preparation for a blood-thirsty, early attack.

4. ... Bg7 5. h4

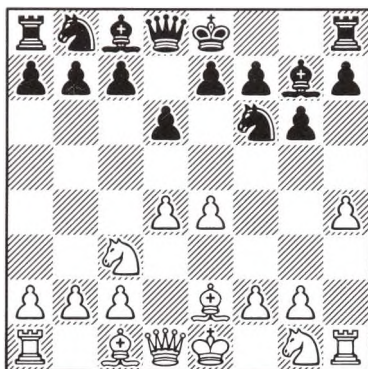


Diagram 65

White draws a bull's-eye on the Black king and leaves the center to the mercy of fate.

His future depends on the outcome of the h-pawn's suicide mission. Chernin now deploys a plan he calls Operation Enter the Dragon, after the final film from the legendary martial artist Bruce Lee.

5. ... c5 6. dxc5

After 6. d5, Black continues 6. ... h5, achieving good play. Additionally, after 6. d5 Black can ignore White's h-pawn's advance in favor of 6. ... 0-0, because White has to deal with the consequences of both ... b7-b5 and ... e7-e6. Black's last move (5. ... c5) follows the classical prescription against the wing attack—a counter in the center.

6. ... Qa5

Black has transposed to a favorable position *à la* the Sicilian Dragon. Nothing remains for White but to defend e4 by 7. Kf1 or 7. Qd3. In both cases, after 7. ... Qxc5, White continues to pin his hopes on the march of the h-pawn. Benjamin chooses the queen move, preserving his right to castle.

7. Qd3

This continuation adds the possibility for White in some variations of forcing an exchange of queens by checking on b5.

7. ... Qxc5

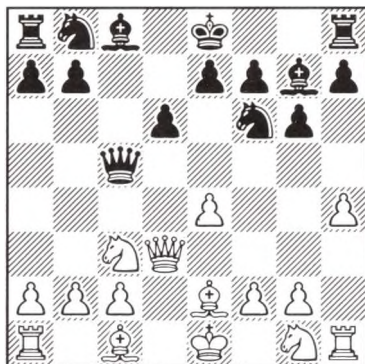


Diagram 66

8. Be3 Qa5 9. h5 Nxh5

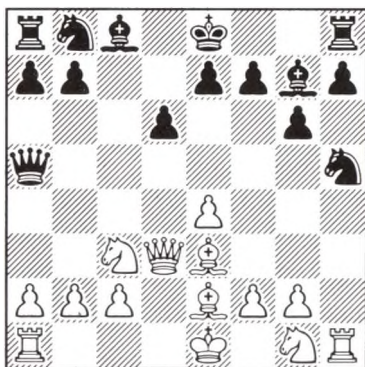


Diagram 67

But not 9. ... Nxe4??. 10. Qb5+, winning. With 9. ... Nxh5, Black aims to spoil White's queenside pawns.

10. Qb5+

If White chooses instead 10. Bxh5, he has to accept mangled queenside pawns after 10. ... Bxc3+ 11. bxc3 gxh5 12. Ne2 Nc6.



Diagram 68

After 12. ... Nc6

Now if White goes for the h-pawn with 13. Nf4, Chernin plays ... Bg4! After 14. f3, Black continues 14. ... Ne5, with the advantage. Here the natural 15. Qd4? fails to 15. ... Bxf3.

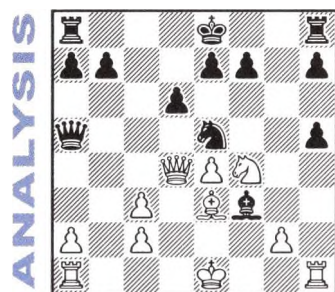


Diagram 69

After 15. ... Bxf3

Now back to what actually happened on the board after 10. Qb5+.

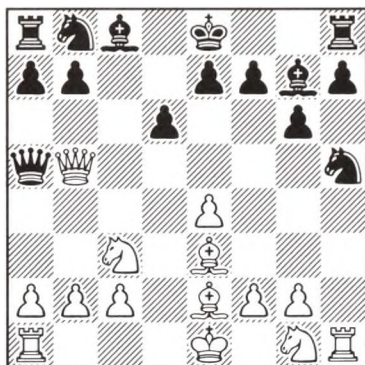


Diagram 70

10. ... Qxb5 11. Nxb5 Na6 12. Bxh5 gxh5 13. 0-0-0

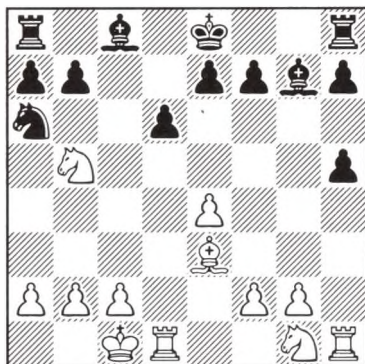


Diagram 71

Somewhat better is 13. Bd4, when Black enjoys only a small advantage.

**CHERNIN GETS A BETTER
POSITION AS BLACK
AFTER ONLY 16 MOVES
AGAINST A WORLD-CLASS
PLAYER WHO CERTAINLY
KNOWS HIS OPENINGS.**

13. ... f5! 14. exf5 Bxf5

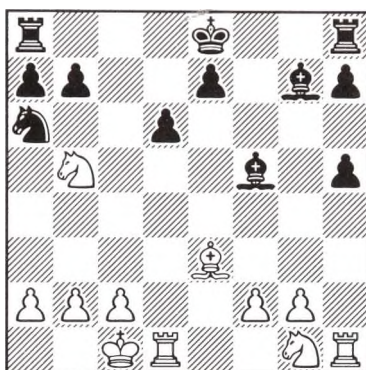


Diagram 72

Black's light-square bishop energetically enters the game.

15. Rxd6

Joel has ideas of his own, after all. After 15. ... exd6, comes 16. Nxd6+, collecting two pawns and the bishop on f5.

15. ... Bxc2!

Removing the bishop from the forking square.

16. Rd2 Bg6

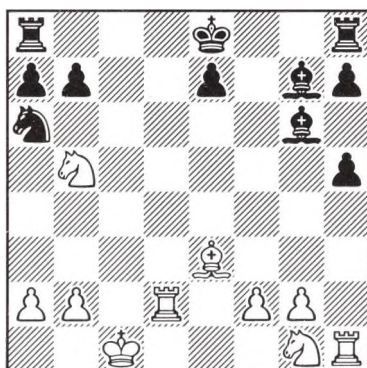


Diagram 73

Chernin has a better position as Black after only 16 moves against a world-class player who certainly knows his openings. A

resume item for both Alex and the Pirc!

PERSONAL COACHES AND ALEX CHERNIN'S UNUSUAL BOOK

We've mentioned from time to time that a personal coach can do wonders for your game. Some of the stories about Alex illustrate the point about as well as it can be made. The right books can be enlightening as well. Chernin's *Pirc Alert!* offers probably the most comprehensive explanation of the ideas of an opening ever published. Your co-authors "disclose" their involvement with the book, but certainly give the theoretical credit to Alex, who assumes the role of "GM at the reader's elbow." He deserves great credit for holding nothing back. He shares the many TNs he's uncovered over two decades of playing the Pirc, and explains the foundational ideas of the opening in a way that should set a new, and hard to achieve, standard for serious opening books.

You can bet that Garry Kasparov, along with other chess-elite, has poured through *Pirc Alert!*.



Not just a theoretician, Chernin is a world-championship candidate and the leading practitioner of the Pirc.

Chapter 17

Kings Without Castles

Does every king long to barricade himself in his castle? As beginners, we learn to avoid keeping our king in the center. We read how His Highness' dallying in the middle files with the common folk inevitably brings about the chess equivalent of the guillotine (not the cutting edge we have in mind when we study theory). Like many "rules" learned at an early stage, this generalization, though helpful, doesn't apply in all cases. In fact, this particular dictum has many exceptions—in positions where the center can't be effectively pried open.

When your authors and GM Alex Chernin brought out *Pirc Alert!*, we promised to keep readers apprised of important ideas and developments in the defense. Now we will discuss, using Chernin's ideas and analysis from key games, the principles of placing the king in the Pirc Defense. The ideas we discuss can apply to many openings.

There's hardly any decision more important than where to place your king. Your choice of royal residences shouldn't be automatic in the Pirc—due to the closed character of many Pirc varia-

**IN THE PIRC, KEEPING THE
KING IN THE CENTER IS OFTEN
SIMPLY A REASONABLE CHOICE.**

tions. Even in semi-open debuts such as the Sicilian, your choice of spots to pitch the king's campaign tent is not automatic—His Majesty is sometimes best placed on the queenside, or even left in the center. But in the Sicilian, the decision to leave the monarch in the middle is frequently made by necessity, not choice.

In the Pirc, however, keeping the king in the center is often simply a reasonable choice. In these cases, it can be protected just as effectively by center pawns as solidly as it could be on the flanks. One natural drawback to the king's living in the center is the separation of the rooks and sometimes the queen. But in closed positions, a player is often fortunate to have meaningful work for even one rook! The “lack of coordination” that is a danger in a position with open lines is not a major drawback in many Pirc Defenses, and other closed, positions.

Let's take a look at three positions in which Black played the star move ... Kf8!.

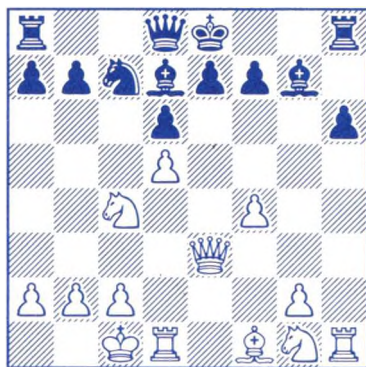


Diagram 74

**Anand—Chernin
Paris, 1995
17. ... Kf8! ♚**

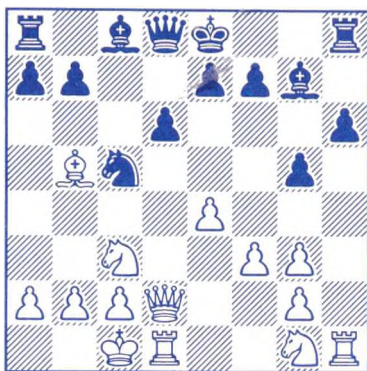


Diagram 75

Leko—Chernin
Budapest, 1997
12. ... Kf8! ♠ (12. ... Bd7=)

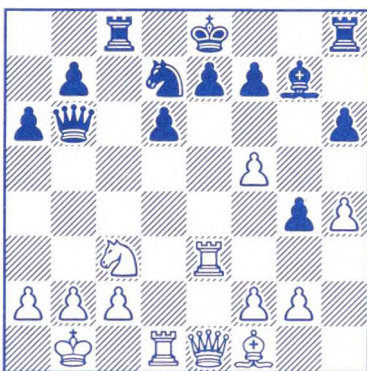


Diagram 76

Beliavsky—Chernin
Portoroz, 1997
19. ... Kf8! ♠

WHY IS ... Kf8 SO STRONG IN THESE POSITIONS?

First of all, the lack of a dynamic mobile center for White is an important factor. In Anand—Chernin, the d5-pawn is blocked and its natural ramming partner, the e-pawn, is missing. In Leko—Chernin, the d4-pawn is absent and e4-e5 is prevented. In

IN ALL THREE CASES, THE POSITIONAL RESULT OF THE MOVE ... Kf8! IS THE SAME—THE REST OF BLACK'S PIECES, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE ROOK ON h8, TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN THE PLAY.

Beliavsky—Chernin, White has neither e- or d-pawn. The second reason that makes Black's king-in-the-center defense so strong is the effective offensive-defensive actions of the bishop on g7. While Black's king is safe on f8 under the protection of his g7-bishop, Black has a free hand in using this bishop. The third reason in favor of ... Kf8 is that Black's kingside is compromised. Otherwise, ... 0-0 would be an even better move. As for ... 0-0-0, it's impossible. It would put the king into the area of Black's own expansion—his monarch has no royal business to conduct there.

In all three cases, the positional result of the move ... Kf8! is the same—the rest of Black's pieces, with the possible exclusion of the rook on h8, take an active part in the play.

Here is an example of a different kind. In contrast to the previous positions, the situation in the center is very tense.

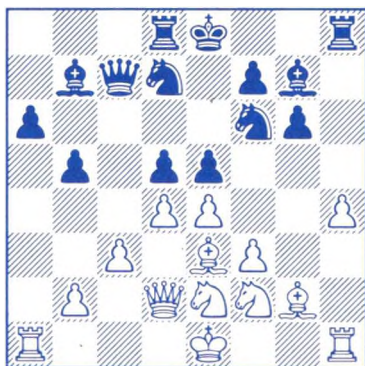


Diagram 77

**Miladinovich—Istratescu
Castoria, 1996**

Here, the nice move **18. ... Kf8!** is again very strong. Why? As we discussed in *Pirc Alert!*, such a two-on-two pawn press in the center is momentary. Captures will soon clear both central files. In these conditions, of course it would be good to evacuate the king from e8 in order to use the square for a rook to assault the enemy. But if Black castles short, White has the ready-made attacking plan of Be3-h6 and h4-h5. Additionally, playing ... 0-0 removes the rook from the semi-open h-file. Castling would then put Black's king in a dangerous position and at the same time give up the good offensive position of the h8-rook. Compelling reasons to look for an alternative!

18. ... Kf8! 19. Bg5 Re8 20. 0-0

The pressure on the center from 19. ... Re8 forces White to castle into an unsafe position.

(Castling long is even riskier for White.)

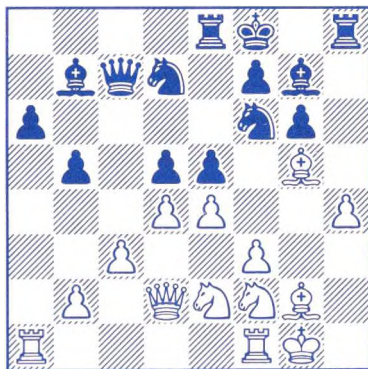


Diagram 78

20. ... Nh7 21. f4

On 21. Be3 or 21. Bh6, 21. ... Qd8 is a very strong rejoinder.

21. ... Nxg5 22. hxg5 dxe4 23. fxe5

If 23. dxe5, then 23. ... Ne5! 24. Ne4 Nc4 -+.

We've reached the following interesting position.

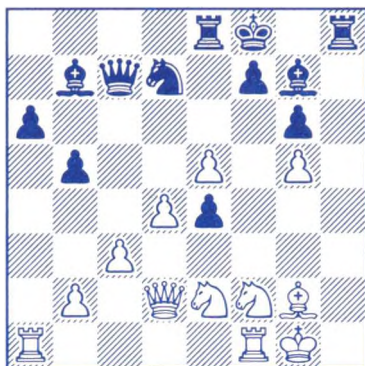


Diagram 79

Here White would not stand so badly if there were no tactical solutions for Black.

However ...

23. ... Nxe5! 24. dxe5 Bxe5 25. Ng4 Bh2+ 26. Kf2 e3!+

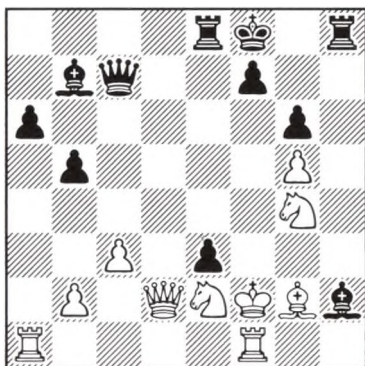


Diagram 80

27. Nxe3 Bf4 28. Nxf4 Qxf4+ 29. Ke2 Qg4+

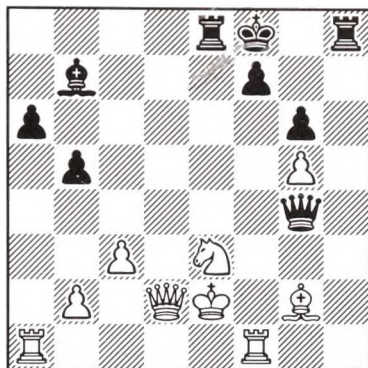


Diagram 81

30. Kf2 Qh4+ 31. Kg1 Qh2+ 32. Kf2 Rh4!

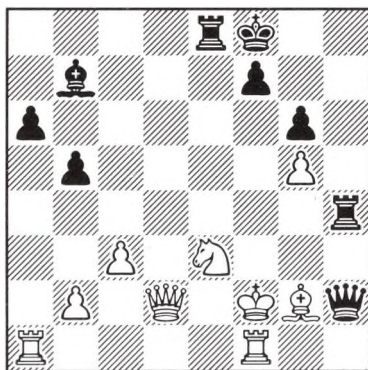


Diagram 82

Black has a winning attack.

33. Rh1 Qf4+ 34. Ke2 Bxg2 35. Rxh4 Qxh4 36. Qd4 Qh2 37. Re1

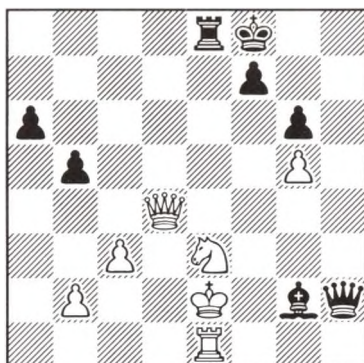


Diagram 83

37. ... Bd5+! 38. Kd1 Bb3+ 39. Kc1

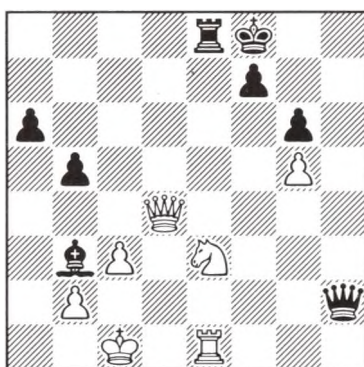


Diagram 84

39. ... Rxe3! 40. Qd8+ Kg7 0-1

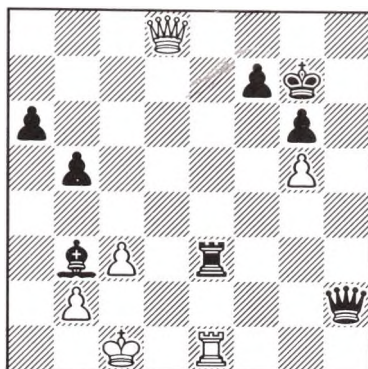


Diagram 85

White is helpless against mate.

To conclude our review of kings in the center, let's look at a choice other than ... Kf8.

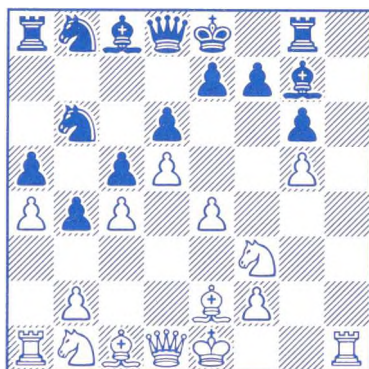


Diagram 86

Kovacevic—Seirawan
Wijk aan Zee, 1980

14. ... Kd7!

To take advantage of this rare king maneuver toward the queen-side, actually crossing the d-file in front of his queen in the opening, Black has to be absolutely certain that the center is locked. In this position, Black reaps big dividends with **14. ... Kd7!** His united queen and rook quickly take part in the fight for the impor-

tant h-file. In a few moves, Black will be effectively castled queenside “by hand.”

What’s more, the reader can see that this “castling long” maneuver is accomplished without playing ... Bb7, because the bishop is effective on the c8-h3 diagonal.

15. Nbd2 Rh8 16. Rg1 Kc7 17. Rb1 Rh3 18. b3 Qh8 19. Nf1 N8d7 20. Bf4

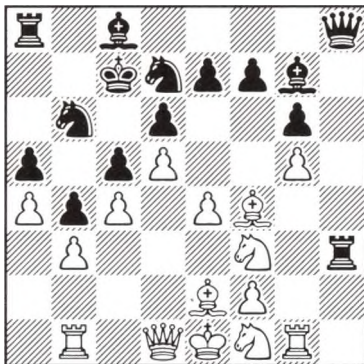


Diagram 87

20. ... Ne5 21. Nxe5 Bxe5 22. Bxe5 Qxe5

As a result of his king’s maneuver, Black’s queen reaches the center in an economic way.

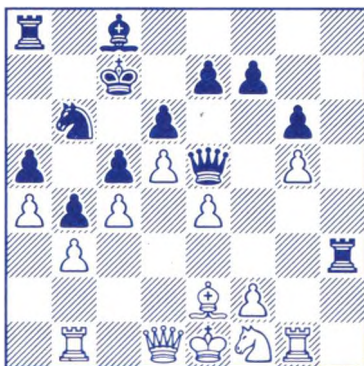


Diagram 88

23. f3 Bd7 24. Qc2 Qd4 25. Rg2 Rh1 26. Rf2

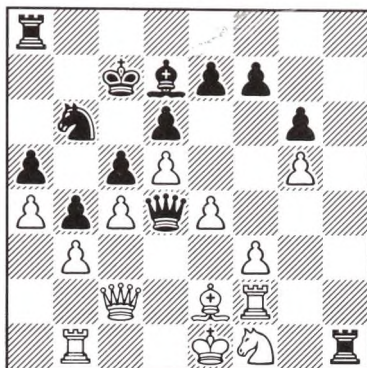


Diagram 89

26. ... Qh8! 27. f4 Qh4 28. Rd1 f6 29. gxf6 exf6 30. e5 fxe5 31. fxe5 Rf8 32. exd6+

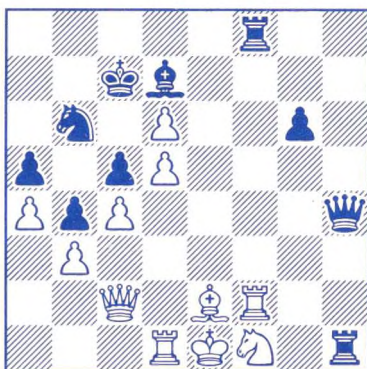


Diagram 90

32. ... Kb7 33. Bd3 Re8+ 0-1

**THIS “CASTLING LONG”
MANEUVER IS ACCOMPLISHED
WITHOUT PLAYING ... Bb7,
BECAUSE THE BISHOP IS
EFFECTIVE ON THE C8-H3
DIAGONAL.**



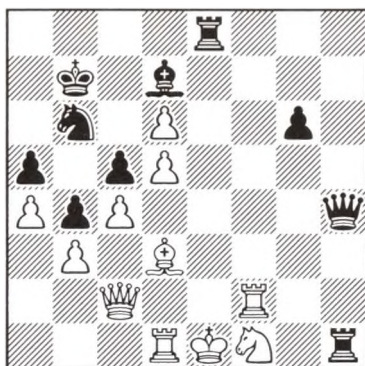


Diagram 91

If 34. Be2, then Black smashes through with 34. ... Rxf1+.

Black's king maneuver in this last game is, of course, an advanced technique—in fact, one that belongs to the highest level of difficulty. However, a player who wants to master the subtle Pirc or, indeed, other closed positions, should (and can) acquire these techniques. We hope this chapter will help you do just this.

And there's always the joy of “thinking out of the box”—and, when it works, into the center!



Left to Right: American grandmaster Larry Evans, Walter Browne, Lev Alburt, Larry Christiansen, Jim Tarjan, Yasser Seirawan and Lubomir Kavalek

Chapter 18

Ross Perot Chess

Looking Under the Hood of Analysis and Evaluation, SOPR, Part I

Unless 2000's November stalemate in Florida (requiring adjudication, a term used in chess as well as the courts, and disparaged in both by the losers) has erased all memories of other U.S. presidential elections, you probably remember a Texan named Ross Perot who could afford to buy long spots on television, during which he was fond of showing us charts and graphs to illustrate his points. Occasionally he would mix statistical measurements and auto mechanics by proclaiming in his best down-home manner, "Let's just lift up the hood and take a look."

Neither Perot's graphics nor his engine-peeking-perspective can improve your chess game—and they also didn't do much for his electoral vote, for that matter. But we've always loved a good chart, and it's odd that a quantitative, visual game like chess does not incite more lines, bars and pies. And most of us love a good metaphor, especially a "conceit" comparing two things that seem so different, like a car engine to the millions of government workers working under contradictory guidelines and linked by 1980s computer programs, for example.

Of course it's true that we see chess charts occasionally—normally when the topic is openings, the frequency of their appearance or their results. In the early 1970s, before GM Leonid Shamkovich left the old Soviet Union for the U.S., he began to use graphics to show the changing evaluation of a game. Then in 1983, GM Lev Alburt, a physicist by training, refined the graphic presentation of a chess game, linking it to a likely outcome of the ongoing evaluation of the game's positions.

Tournament players know that evaluation is a critical skill:

- ▲ We have to evaluate a position correctly to come up with the right plans;
- ▲ Before we decide on a move or a plan, we need to know if the resulting, future positions are favorable to us; to do this, we must evaluate them effectively.

But before we get to evaluation, we have to go through analysis. Not necessarily psychoanalysis, but at times our task may seem as challenging.

ANALYSIS IN CHESS

Each player and every one of his chess books is concerned on some level with *analysis* and *evaluation*, the inescapable words in chess. We all talk about analysis. Sometimes we even talk about a player “out-analyzing” his opponent. In the spirit of the self-admitted chess-duffer Albert Einstein, who encouraged us never to stop asking the “childish” questions, let's pursue the meaning of the ubiquitous *analyze*. What does it really mean in chess? After all, since everyone talks about it as the lynchpin of good play, we'd do well to understand analysis on a basic level, as a skilled musician understands the scales and harmonics of his craft. Or, say, as an old-time master mechanic knows the knocks and pings of an internal combustion engine. So let's pop the hood.

OBFUSCATING BIFURCATIONS

It turns out that chess “analysis” has two very common meanings and this double entendre complicates the word's use a bit. One meaning is calculation—the visualization of “what ifs,” the

if-I-go-there-he-goes-there and so on of our game. Sometimes someone writes that GM Nostradamus “analyzed” or “saw” ten moves ahead, (presumably in all reasonable variations). That’s analysis as calculation.

The other meaning of analysis—common whether the topic is chess, chemistry or computer systems—is the process of breaking down the object of study into its component parts and understanding how these elements relate and work together. In chess the component parts are the chessmen and chessboard squares. Understanding how these elements work together can require using nonphysical concepts such as time and weak-square complexes.

MORPHING FROM A STRICT MATERIALIST TO A STRATEGIST

If we play strictly to win material opportunistically—in other words, wait for our opponent to hand over pawns and pieces, or bait traps to win material—we may generally beat weak players, but will surely fall to our area’s top guns the way Morphy’s contemporaries were consistently bamboozled by the world’s first accurate analyzer and evaluator. To really get good, we need to analyze and evaluate our way through our games.

Morphy showed us how to use analysis and evaluation. We must employ the process to help us decide how each new candidate move affects our chances. In other words, we don’t make the move that promises the most CP (“cheapo potential”)—unless we’re hopelessly lost strategically. Instead we select the moves leading to positions that are evaluated in our favor.

THE ELEMENTS OF ANALYSIS

Without a proper set of standards, analysis and evaluation would be fruitless. But Morphy, and Steinitz, the champion of his ideas, established these criteria for us nearly 150 years ago.

THE PIECES

Every position of course includes pieces. Besides knowing how they move, the analyzer must know the values of each component

of the armies. Traditionally, these values are based on the pawn's worth as 1 unit. Most of us learned the chart below. GM Lev Alburt finds the values on the right more precise.

Pawn = 1	Pawn = 1
Knight = 3	Knight = 3 1/4
Bishop = 3	Bishop = 3 1/2
Rook = 5	Rook = 5
Queen = 9	Queen = 9 1/2
King = infinity (it's invaluable)	King = 2 1/2 (as a fighting piece)

Of course, these are beginning, general values. Players can't be relentless chessboard accountants, or the game would be too dull to captivate the cream of human intellect as it has over the centuries. The effectiveness of a chessman varies in context. One side can be materially down but have strategic compensation. We've all seen a pawn on the seventh rank obviously equal to the rook that has to give itself up to stop the foot soldier from queening.

STRONG ELEMENTS

In addition, there are conceptual elements that tend to increase a player's overall advantage.

- ▲ Rapid development (lead in tempi—the number of effective moves made)
- ▲ Space advantage (greater room and freer play)
- ▲ Initiative (the ability to create threats, whether immediate or short term)
- ▲ Attack (direct assault on any of the enemy's pieces, including his king, or weak points)
- ▲ King safety (more secure king position)

- ♠ Piece activity (also called mobility, and includes coordination of the pieces)

There's a subset of strong elements here—here is a sampling:

Bishop pair, good bishop vs. bad knight, good knight vs. bad bishop, doubled rooks on the seventh, control of open or semi-open files and diagonals, flexibility, effective blockade, centralized pieces, pins, batteries, active king in the ending, owning the opposition.

- ♠ Pawn structure.

Again, there is a subset of related strengths, and we offer only examples:

Preponderance of center pawns, control of the center, effective phalanxes, connected pawns, strong pawn chains or complexes, pawn steam-roller, mobile majority, minority attack, strong points, passed pawns—especially connected passed pawns or outside passed pawns, strong outpost squares.

WEAK ELEMENTS

Also under the hood of any chessboard position are weaknesses that have nothing to do with the material point-count. Most are the flip-side of the strengths given above:

- ♠ Lag in development
- ♠ Cramped position
- ♠ Passive position
- ♠ Defensive posture
- ♠ Exposed king
- ♠ Limited piece activity (mobility or coordination)

The subset: bad bishop or knight (for example, a knight on the rim), pinned pieces, trapped pieces, decentralized pieces.

▲ Pawn structure:

Doubled or tripled pawns, isolated pawns, backward pawns, hanging pawn duo, split pawns, blockaded pawns, fixed pawns, multiple pawn islands, crippled pawn majority, weak pawn minority, weak squares or holes, targets, and many more.

OFF-SETTING ELEMENTS

Most positions you'll get are a combination of strengths and weaknesses. Even the same element can have strong and weak attributes. Doubled pawns are an example. Evaluated by themselves, they are weak because they cannot protect each other. But in the context of the entire board, doubled pawns can offer advantages. They can provide an important open file, or control key squares.

So analysis and evaluation are complicated challenges. Unsurprisingly, as a player gains more and more experience, trying his best to analyze and evaluate, he gains proficiency. Pattern recognition, the storehouse of similar situations in a player's recollection, is the Rosetta Stone that eventually makes the process possible. Good books on strategy are a key vitamin supplement, but the training diet must include experience.



Left to Right, at the 2001 Hall of Fame Grand Opening: U.S. grandmasters Lev Alburt, Arnold Denker, Arthur Bisguier, Lubomir Kavalek, Edmar Mednis and Robert Byrne

THE MAGIC EVALUATION DECODER RING— SYMBOLS AND TERMINOLOGY

Once a position is analyzed, chess books the world over generally use seven different symbols to sum up the overall evaluation of a position.

+ -	White has a decisive advantage
±	White has a clear advantage
±±	White has a slight advantage
=	Chances are
±±±	Black has a slight advantage
±±±±	Black has a clear advantage
- +	Black has a decisive advantage

Individual moves can carry assessment values as well: “!” indicates a good move; “!!” signifies a very good move; “?” marks a weak move; “??” denotes a blunder; “!?” notes an interesting or provocative move; while “?! ” sets off a dubious move. These are the cheers and boos of chess. They add excitement and a dimension of understanding to game annotations.

The publishing industry is understandably fond of these space-saving and multi-language symbols. Codes saves many a word and has gained worldwide acceptance. We’ve all come to accept them as a matter of course. But really, how good are they? We think they have a number of serious faults.

1. These symbols don’t supply enough information.

Used without words to annotate a game, they become confusing to average players. Although the marks indicate who stands better, they do not indicate what elements of the position contribute to the assessment. It’s true that *Informant* publications introduced some additional symbols to help rectify this problem, but we strongly recommend using games annotated by grandmasters

using *words* until you are well along in the chess hierarchy—say master strength. (Yes, we know that may come as a shock.) You may like the comfort of receiving and perusing the “latest theory,” but realize that in terms of the maximal time-efficiency of your chess studies, verbal, GM-level explanations are hard to beat.

2. The symbols' definitions are inconsistent.

Take “+−” for example—what exactly is a “decisive advantage”? The plus that Kasparov needs to force a win is significantly smaller than the plus you need. This annotation alone has caused a lot of frustration among amateurs. Indeed, many times, average players will not have the first idea of how to proceed to win in a book position marked with the “+−” sign. Clearly there is a wide range within the scope of this symbol. We can be a rook up, or Bobby Fischer could be practically anywhere in a Sozin Sicilian!

3. The symbol “!? ” is frequently misunderstood.

This annotation can mean “deserving consideration,” “double-edged,” “enterprising,” “risky,” or “provocative.” It can designate a move that is unsound, or an interesting move. So what is a student to make of this hodgepodge? Is a move thus annotated good, bad or just obscure? Sometimes only the annotator knows what he means, and sometimes one has to wonder if the symbol is a fudge to cover a move that the writer simply hasn’t taken the time to figure out.

4. Even the “= ” symbol can be misleading.

Perhaps the most common sign, this one also covers a wide range of possibilities. Perhaps the position is evenly and dynamically balanced, or perhaps it’s drawish—two very different things! Does the game offer “practical equality,” so clear that it offers little chance for either side to go seriously wrong? Is it a “theoretical equality,” in which the defender must play accurately to get his half-point? If a position is in dynamic equilibrium, both sides could actually enjoy winning chances! The equal sign doesn’t give us much guidance.

5. *The traditional symbols do not offer the varying degrees of advantage or disadvantage.*

When we read the words of a GM-annotator, we frequently run across phrases such as “White stands only a little better,” or “White has an edge,” or “White’s advantage is clear.” Although these three phrases are meant to distinguish between progressively increasing, slight advantages for White, they would all receive the same “ $\pm$ ” sign in publications. One could dream up a model with an increasing number of parallel lines beneath the equal sign, but such a system would be hard to read and otherwise impractical.

THE SYSTEM OF PREDICTED RESULTS— STATISTICAL CONFIRMATIONS

We advocate a system that assigns a numerical value based upon the estimated number of points that White is predicted to score (or has scored) out of ten games played from the specific position between grandmasters of equal strength. (You may try SOPR for players of your level, too.) An absolute winning position would have an evaluation of 10. A totally lost position for White is a 0. A dead draw is 5. Decimal points offer many distinctions.

AMATEURS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO IMPORTANT RESEARCH

Interestingly, SOPR (System of Predicted Results) allows for statistically based confirmations of both hypothesized evaluations and research to establish evaluations. After all, modern game databases allow speedy searches on precise positions! This is an area where amateurs can do very important, quantitative and objective work. Keep in mind that you should consider only GMs within 50 FIDE points of each other, eliminating lesser players and mismatches from the list of games your database puts together for you based on the position you’ve asked it to search for.

A comparison to astronomy comes to mind. Professional astronomers can’t watch for every previously unobserved comet to appear. It’s a big sky, and they have more demanding tasks to accomplish with their high-powered equipment. But amateurs can

and do pick up the slack, and once in a while wind up with their names on a recurring astronomical event!

In general, statistics show that for every 10 GM games played nowadays, White scores 5.5 out of 10. Thus we can conclude that the initial position in chess should be evaluated at 5.5. Our theory is already bolstered by statistics and general knowledge. Authorities agree that White has a slight but meaningful opening edge.

Our SOPR approach shows that many positions traditionally considered to be “theoretical draws” don’t stand up as such in GM play.

Take the following example, the position after 60. h4, with Black to move.

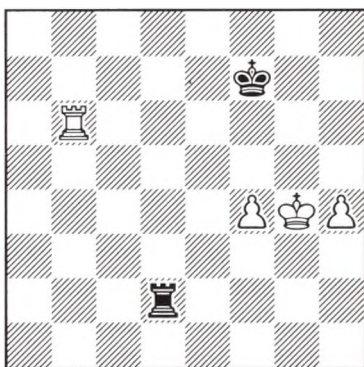


Diagram 92

**Browne—Shamkovich
U.S. Championship, 1981**

White won on move 107. This type of ending, with king, rook and f- and h-pawns (or a- and c-pawns), still on the fourth rank, is correctly regarded as a theoretical draw in all the endgame texts. But in actual praxis, it is frequently won by White.

NO STATS?—USE EXTRAPOLATION

Of course, there are some positions for which we won't find GM examples, or locate enough games between similarly rated GMs. In that case, we can use extrapolation, estimating the numerical values from the essential elements turned up in our analysis of the position. This process requires practice and developed insight. Going carefully over GM notes to games will give you a sense of the evaluations that go with various kinds of positional factors.

CHESS GRAPHS

It seems we've certainly been looking under the hood, but what about those charts? Using the SOPR system, we can chart the progress of a game, tracking its changing evaluation—even the up-and-down swings in an exciting back-and-forth game. In the next chapter, we chart a game played by co-author Lev Alburt in the 1986 U.S. Championship.



Left to Right: Lev Alburt, Arthur Bisguier, Samuel Reshevsky, Mikhail Botvinnik, Neil McKelvie, Bruce Pandolfini and Stanley Grayson at the Manhattan Chess Club in 1983.



Top: Dato Tan, Al Lawrence and former Chess Life Editor Larry Parr. Right: Sammy Reshevsky, Mikhail Botvinnik and former world-champion-candidate-turned psychoanalyst Reuben Fine.



Top: Lev Alburt gives a youngster a tip at a simultaneous exhibition. Right: Lev and Al at Lev's 2003 induction into the Chess Hall of Fame in Miami.



Chapter 19

Discover Your Own Chess Comet

SOPR, Part II

In the previous chapter, we took an initial look at GM Lev Albur's System of Predicted Results. Many players have told us that they found it an exciting and sensible innovation. First, SOPR improves upon the traditional evaluation marks ($=$, $+/-$, etc.) in a number of significant ways. SOPR expands and clarifies the widely used evaluation symbols. Second, the system allows us to test hair-splitting, judgmental opinion (i.e., White is slightly better) against results in a statistically valid way. Third, SOPR allows us to graphically chart the ebb and flow of a game.

Rather than the range of traditional markers, SOPR offers an infinite continuum of evaluations—from 10.0, an absolutely winning position for White, to 0, a crushing win for Black—with any decimal possible within that range. Further, the numbers on the SOPR continuum are completely understandable, unlike the traditional markers, which can be confusing and even inconsistent.

PRESCRIPTIVE VERSUS DESCRIPTIVE EVALUATIONS

But there's more to SOPR than more finely delineated and

clearer evaluations. SOPR can be a data-based evaluation—that's where the words "Predicted Results" come in. Linguists and social scientists often make a distinction between "prescriptive" and "descriptive" statements. Suppose, for example, your coach tells you "Players should castle in the first 15 moves of the game." Your teacher is making a prescriptive statement—telling you what you should or must do. His is a statement of opinion (perhaps well informed) and can be argued with—it's particularly vulnerable to counter-example.

But suppose instead your teacher sets you down in front of a ChessBase desktop icon, conducts a database search of 10,000 master games—and then accurately summarizes the results with the statement: "Master-players who castle within the first 15 moves average .55 of a point per game, while masters who castle later than 15 moves average .45 of a point per game." This is a descriptive statement. One can quibble only about the size or validity of the sampling of games researched.

AMATEUR VS. ANAND, =

Does anyone care to do the real research? This sort of statistical analysis of the well worn "truths" (prescriptions) of chess can now be done as efficiently by amateurs as by Anand. And results will be as valid. Validity (sample size and relevance) and reliability (replication of results) are the characteristics that compel respect in such research, not the FIDE ratings of the researcher. Of course, we have to be careful not to draw greater inferences than our research supports. For example, if we sample GM games only, the results won't accurately forecast results among amateurs. This whole area of chess research opens up the possibilities of meaningful contributions by amateurs all over the world, in much the same way that a moonlighting amateur astronomer can wind up pinning his name on the tail of that newly discovered comet.

DON'T FIDDLE WITH NIRO

Experienced chess sleuths already know that a complicated chess position can elicit as many opinions as there are GMs who analyze it. Such evaluations are therefore subjective and prescriptive. Recently, Frank Niro, a former President of the U.S. Chess Trust and former USCF Executive Director, reminisced about an over-the-board sacrificial



Frank Niro

attack he played back in June of 2000 in Greenwich, Connecticut, against International Master Ron Burnett. Several of Frank's pieces went missing in action in forays against Burnett's kingside, and the opponents sued for peace in the resulting unbalanced position. Niro, a strong correspondence player, is at his USCF over-the-board rating floor of 1700. He was understandably pleased to split the point with a pro like Burnett, of course, but remained intrigued about the "correct" outcome.

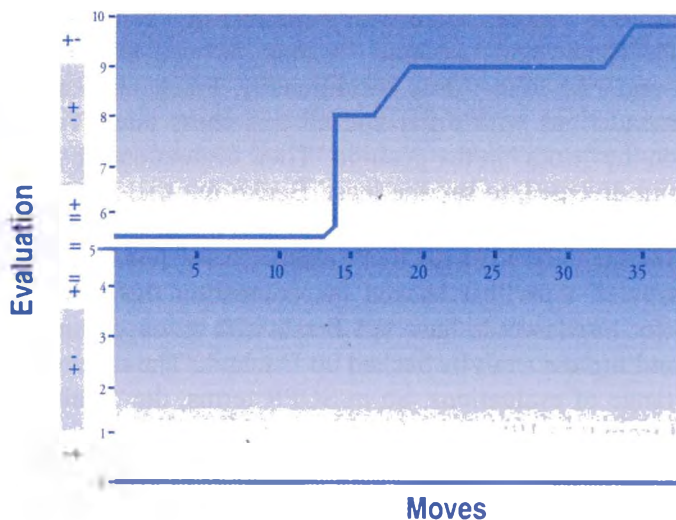
So he went over his score with a number of strong players—GMs Pal Benko and Lubomir Ftachnik, as well as IM Danny Kopec and FM John Curdo. Additionally, Frank checked their recommendations with Fritz. Did all this chess talent find and agree on the "truth" in the position? Their evaluations at the critical point diverged, to say the least. Benko felt that Burnett had handed Niro a "gift" with the IM's 29th move. But when Ftachnik and Niro sat over espresso in Princeton, New Jersey, that GM demonstrated lines that backed his contention that other 29th moves for Black would have left Frank with an easy win. Fritz' silent and tireless analysis backed up Ftachnik. The other experts had a range of evaluations. So in SOPR terms, the "evaluation" ranged from 0 to 10!

Frank Niro, by the way, is a man familiar with the ins and outs of research. He was a doctoral candidate—in chess!—at what has

become the leading university for chess studies, the University of Texas-Dallas. Niro was at a meeting at the World Chess Hall of Fame & Sidney Samole Museum in Miami, discussing plans for the grand opening weekend, when he related his evaluation odyssey to Al Lawrence. Co-incidentally, Niro is actually an inductee in another Hall—the Bentley College Athletic Hall of Fame. In 1966, as an 18-year-old, Frank became the youngest U.S. runner officially to complete a marathon in less than three hours. Later, he became CEO of one of the largest hospitals in New England. In fact, in 1989, when Frank was just 40, he was chosen as one of the “top 25 turnaround hospital administrators in the U.S.” The Trust and the new Hall of Fame were lucky to have his leadership.

GRAPHING A GAME

Besides diagrams or photos of the hunched-over combatants, it’s unusual to see graphics of a particular chess game. SOPR, however, allows a visual presentation of the ongoing evaluation. The vertical axis plots the evaluation against the move shown on the horizontal axis. Here’s a graph of GM Lev Alburt versus GM Sergey Kudrin, 1986 U.S. championship.



The graph shows us that in this game, White maintained his initial advantage through 14 moves, when White got a clear advantage. Then, at 18, White achieved a winning position.

LEV ALBURT—SERGEY KUDRIN

U.S. Championship 1986

GRUENFELD DEFENSE

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5

In the Gruenfeld Defense Black voluntarily cedes White a pawn center, in the hope of later applying pressure on it.

4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. e4 Nxc3 6. bxc3 Bg7

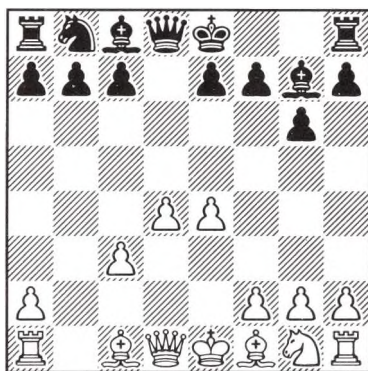


Diagram 93

7. Nf3

Up to the mid-seventies, in this position White used to play 7. Bc4 and 8. Ne2, in order to counter the pin ... Bg4 with f2-f3. Then, however, Grandmaster Igor Platonov from Kiev (Ukraine) began playing 7. Nf3 and this move (briefly and not very successfully used half a century ago) soon became the main line for White.

7. ... c5!

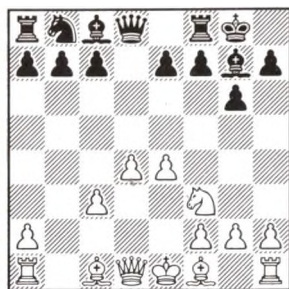


Diagram 94
After 7. ... 0-0

What if Black plays “normally”? 7. ... 0-0 8. Be2! b6 (or 8. ... c5 9. 0-0 Nc6 10. d5! Bxc3 11. Bh6) 9. 0-0 Bb7 10. Qd3! c5 11. Bg5!

White stays clearly better in all variations. Applying Lev’s system of numerical evaluation, scaled from 0.0 (White loses) to 10.0 (White wins), he would evaluate the position after 7. ... 0-0 as [6.0], which means that if two equally strong grandmasters were to play ten games starting with this position, the statistically expected result would be 6-4 in White’s favor. After 7. ... c5! White has just a normal opening advantage – [5.5].

8. Bb5+

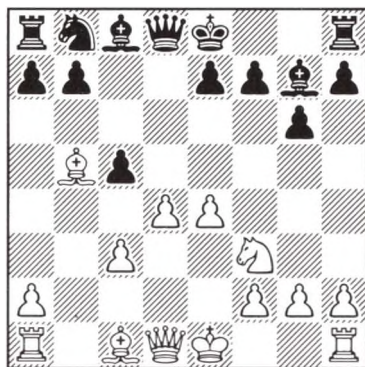


Diagram 95

Other popular moves in this position are 8. Be2, 8. Be3, and especially 8. Rb1, which Vladimir Kramnic successfully employed against Garry Kasparov in their London 2000 match.

8. ... Nc6

8. ... Bd7 9. Rb1 and 8. ... Nd7 9. a4! (preventing Black's expansion with ... a6 and ... b5) both lead to White's advantage – [6.0].

9. 0–0 cxd4 10. cxd4 0–0 11. Be3 Bg4 12. Bxc6 bxc6 13. Rc1

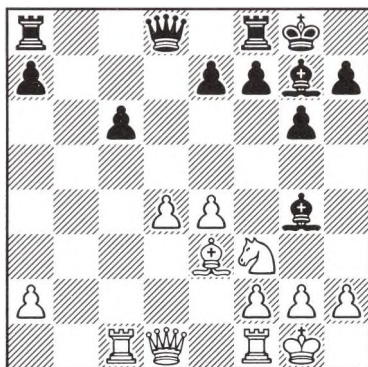


Diagram 96

13. ... Qa5

13. ... Qd7 (defending the pawn) deserves consideration.

14. Qe2 [5.8]

In Alburtt—Tukmakov, Decin 1977, White maintained a slight edge [5.5] in the ending after 14. Rxc6 Qxa2 15. Qa1!.



Diagram 97
After 15. Qa1!

That game ended in a draw after Black successfully defended his position (later, a pawn down) throughout two adjournment sessions. Against Kudrin, I chose for a while to avoid an end-game.

14. ... f5?

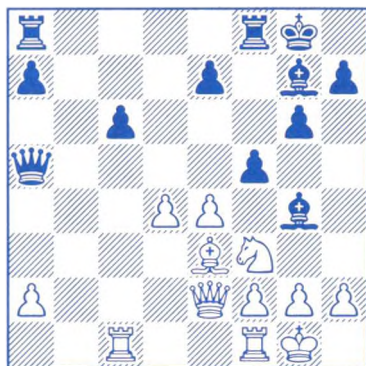


Diagram 98

Black will soon pay for this hyperactive attempt to seize the initiative, and the evaluation curve now jumps up to [8.0], which means a big advantage for White, bordering on a technically winning position. 14. ... Bxf3 or 14. ... Rfd8 leaves Black with a slightly inferior ([5.8], as mentioned above) but playable game.

15. Qc4+ Kh8 16. Ne5

When your opponent makes a move which looks like an obvious blunder—especially if he is a pretty strong player—it is advisable to try to find out what he has overlooked. During the game Lev thought (and he was basically correct) that Kudrin had underestimated this 16th move and overlooked Lev's 18th move, while considering primarily the unclear situation after 16. Ng5? f4!

16. ... Bxe5 [8.0]

The opposite-color bishops will favor White. The alternative 16. ... f4 would have led to complications where, however, White's chances would be again very much better because of his extra

pawn: [8.0].

17. dxe5 f4? [9.0] 18. Bc5!

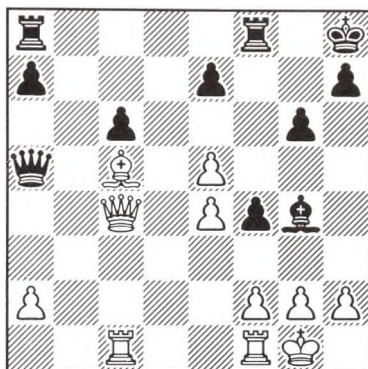


Diagram 99

And now White has a decisive advantage. Black would have had better chances for a successful resistance after 17. ... fxe4, eliminating one of White's powerful center pawns.

18. ... Rae8

Possibly Black overlooked earlier that 18. ... f3 loses the Exchange, with no compensation for it, after 19. Bxe7 fxg2 20. Rfe1

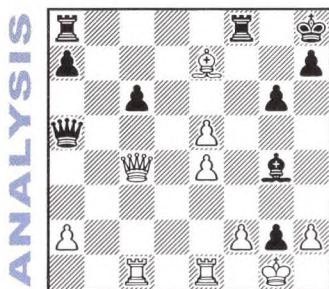


Diagram 100
After 20. Rfe1

19. f3 Bc8 20. Rf2 Ba6 21. Qe6 Qc7 22. Ba3? [8.9]

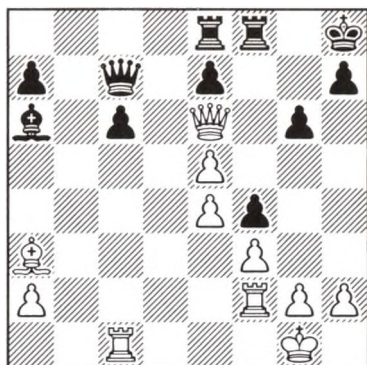


Diagram 101

This prolongs the struggle, which could have been over after the more accurate 22. Bb4 Bb5 23. Rd2, aiming at d7. Fortunately for White, this is the kind of position where slight inaccuracies do not allow the opponent to escape.

22. ... Bb5 23. Bc5

White wanted to avoid the complications which were possible after 23. Rd2 Qa5, but overlooked that, following 24. Bxe7 Qxd2 25. Bf6+ Rxf6 26. Qxe8+ Kg7 27. exf6+ Kh6, he would have an easy win by 28. Qf8+ Kh5 29. Qc5+.

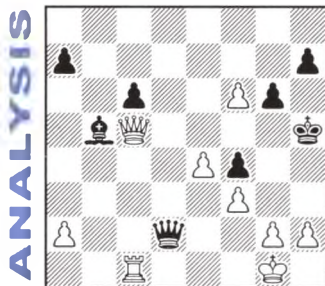


Diagram 102
After 29. Qc5+

23. ... Ba6 24. Ba3

Repeating the position and still overlooking 24. Bb4.

24. ... Bb5 25. h3

Avoiding the three-fold repetition and simultaneously improving the position of the white king.

25. ... Kg7

Black also decides to do something about his king.

26. Kh2 Rf7 27. Qb3

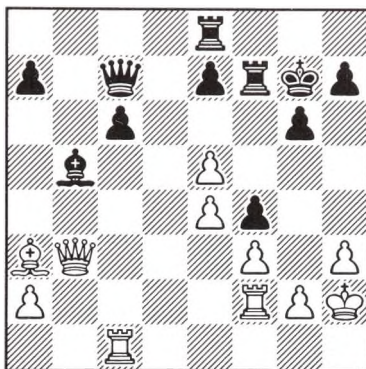


Diagram 103

Black has somehow improved his position, and so now Lev has to regroup his forces.

27. ... e6

This prevents e5-e6, but here the cure (which creates a weakness at d6) is no better than the disease.

28. Rd2 Qc8

Naturally, Black cannot take on e5 because of Bb2, winning his queen. On 28. ... Rd7, offering the exchange of rooks, White could choose between 29. Bd6 and 29. Rd6.

29. Bc5 h5 30. h4! Kh6 31. Rd6 g5 32. a4

Black could not effectively parry this threat.

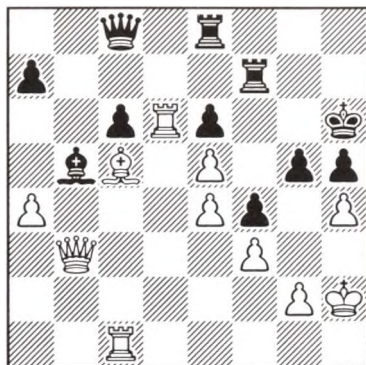


Diagram 104

32. ... gxf4?! [9.9]

A panicked response, but 32. ... Ba6 33. hxf5+ Kxf5 34. Rxc6 also leads to an easy win for White (34. ... Qxc6 35. Be7+).

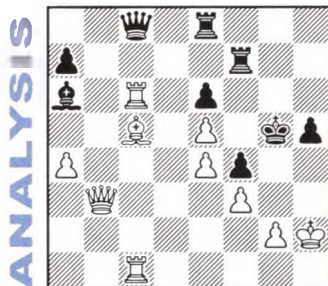


Diagram 105
After 34. Rxc6

33. axb5 Rg7 34. Bf2, and Black resigned.

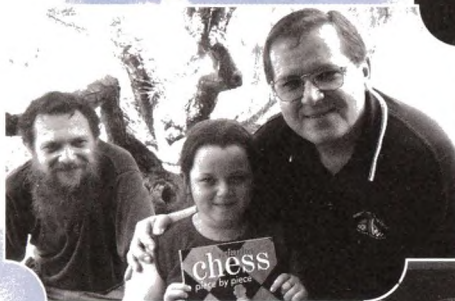
Your own searches can prove valuable. Remember, you can learn to handle chess database searches about as well as anyone. Lots of interesting and important tests are available for you to run. One of our favorite ideas is taking a well known position and comparing the results of international stars with the outcome of amateur games.

It's true that one should ideally play the best move. But isn't "best" a matter of results to some degree? In other words, should you really hunt rabbits with an elephant gun? Those of you who take up the challenge of holding the feet of long-held truths to the fire of database searches or of testing the subjective evaluations of key "schema" against thousands of equally matched games may produce some important insights.



Top: At the 2003 Hall of Fame induction dinner—(left to right) emcee Al Lawrence, Sam Palatnik, inductee Lev Alburt, Susan Polgar, inductee Boris Spassky, Alexandra Kosteniuk, inductee Walter Browne, USCF executive director Frank Niro and U.S. Chess Trust chair Harold Winston. Immediately above: Former U.S. champ Arnold Denker in front of his Hoff plaque. Left: GM Arthur Bisguier (standing in white cap) gives an exhibition in front of the Hall of Fame in Miami.

Hall of Fame Grand Opening December 2001



Above: co-author Lawrence awards a book to a future champ.



José Raul Capablanca's granddaughter, center, and her family were special guests at the dinner.

Right: The Florida Renaissance Historical Society's on-board combat is co-ed.



Background shot: World Chess Hall of Fame Opening Ceremonies in December 2001.



The ribbon cutting ceremony: (left to right) front row, Sharon Samole, Dustin Diamond, Shane Samole, Larcenia Bullard, Edward Bullard, Arnold Denker, Miami Chamber of Commerce president Ramrio Ortiz; back row, Myron Samole, Al Lawrence (partially blocked), Dato Tan Chin Nam, USCF President John McCrary (barely showing), Valentina Jarrett, Harold Winston and Florencio Campomanes.

Chapter 20

Over-the-Board Inspiration

Evaluating & Graphing a

Theoretical Novelty,

SOPR, Part III

The evaluation of chess positions—deciding whether you stand better, worse or equal in a position—is at the heart of playing winning chess. After all, even if you can perfectly “picture” positions many moves ahead in your games, you still need to know whether they’re in your favor before you know to steer for them or avoid them. Even to know what kind of plan is suitable in the position in front of you at the board, you need to know where you stand. Yet the art of evaluation is hardly the most popular topic for chess writers.

As we’ve discussed, even the marks that annotators and publishers traditionally use are inexact and at times confusing. In the previous two chapters, we introduced Lev Alburt’s method of evaluation, “SOPR”—the System of Predicted Results. Its premise is that any position may be assigned a numerical value based on the estimated number of points that White is predicted to score out of ten games played from that position between two grandmasters of equal strength. If White is in an absolutely winning position, the numerical value is 10.0. Conversely, a totally lost position for White is expressed as 0.0. A dead draw is 5.0.



**“SOPR”—THE
SYSTEM OF PREDICTED
RESULTS: ITS PREMISE IS
THAT ANY POSITION MAY BE
ASSIGNED A NUMERICAL VALUE BASED
ON THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF
POINTS THAT WHITE IS PREDICTED TO
SCORE OUT OF TEN GAMES.**

Expressing the move-by-move evaluations of a game in this logical manner makes possible the graphing of a chess game in a way that allows you to see the ebb and flow of decision-making. The game we're looking at in this chapter makes an interesting graph because it reveals the process of dropping an opening bombshell on your opponent. Numbers in brackets give the SOPR evaluation.

HOW TO SURPRISE YOUR OPPONENT

If you play the same opening system over and over again, you should expect that some of your opponents may be well prepared for you. For this reason, grandmasters spend a lot of time re-examining their favorite systems in order to detect, and then to eliminate, “holes” in their opening repertoire. Another good idea is to vary, if not the opening, then at least the system within your favorite opening, and from time to time to surprise your opponents by deviating from your usual main lines. Typically, such work is done, and innovations are found, at home in the comfort of your study. More rarely, a new idea strikes you in a well researched position not before, but during the game...

VIKTOR PUPOLS—LEV ALBURT

U.S. Open, Portland 1987

ALEKHINE'S DEFENSE

The following game was played in round 10 (out of 12). With 7½ points out of 9 (6 wins and 3 draws), Alburton was tied for second place with several other players, half a point behind the

leader. Therefore, he had to play for a win even with the Black pieces. His opponent was a strong correspondence player and a noted theoretician. Not surprisingly, at the board Pupols spent a lot of time—at least a full hour—even before a well known opening position, a so-called “tabia,” was reached after White's 17th move.

1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. Nf3 g6 5. Bc4 Nb6 6. Bb3 Bg7

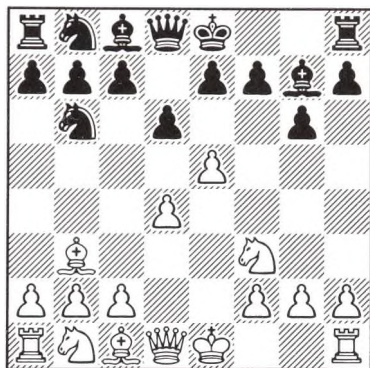


Diagram 106

7. Ng5

For 7. a4!, see note to White's 14th move.

7. ... e6 8. f4

White tries to lock in Black's dark-square bishop.

8. ... dxe5 9. fxe5

Black stands better in the ending after 9. dxe5 Qxd1+ 10. Kxd1 Nc6 [4.5]. In fact, endings occurring in the Alekhine's Defense usually favor Black, because White's over-extended pawn structure, which may be a plus and a foundation for a successful attack in the middlegame, is likely to become a liability once the queens are off the board.

9. ... c5 10. 0-0

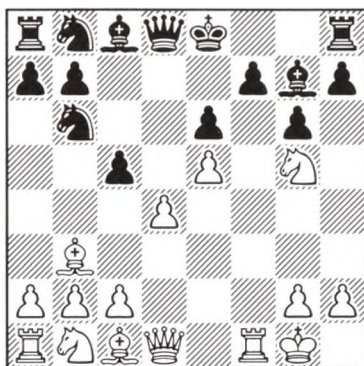


Diagram 107

The more common move order here is 10. c3 cxd4 11. 0-0, which transposes to the same position.

10. ... 0-0

After some thought (about five minutes), Alburst decided not to deviate from the main line mentioned above. After all, 10. ... c4?! 11. Nxf7, followed by 12. Nd6+, is too risky, while 10. ... Qxd4+ 11. Qxd4 cxd4 is possible, but not very promising as a way to play for a win.

11. c3 cxd4 12. cxd4 Nc6



WHITE'S OVER-EXTENDED PAWN STRUCTURE, WHICH MAY BE A PLUS ... FOR A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK IN THE MIDDLEGAME, IS LIKELY TO BECOME A LIABILITY ONCE THE QUEENS ARE OFF.

WHITE USUALLY ENJOYS A SMALL EDGE IN THE OPENING, WHICH STATISTICS SHOW TO BE [5.5].

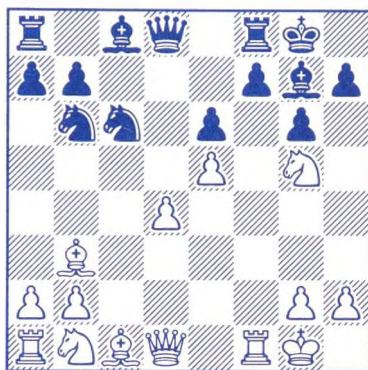
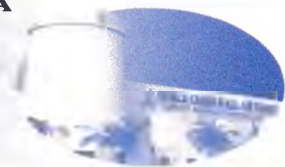


Diagram 108

13. Nf3

Black stands slightly better after 13. Be3 Nd5 14. Bxd5 (14. Bc1 Nde7 and 15. ... Nf5) 14. ... exd5 [4.5].

13. ... f6 [5.0]

This is the only move to offer Black an equal game. Its purpose is to activate the dark-square bishop, and for this purpose it is worth weakening the e6-pawn. So far, the game has developed normally. White usually enjoys a small edge in the opening (let's say, after 1. e4), which statistics show to be [5.5], or a score of 5.5-4.5 in White's favor out of 10 games played between grandmasters. Some grandmasters consider the Alekhine's Defense to be only semi-correct; in other words, Black is not supposed to achieve equality here. Alburst used to hold a quite different opinion, and to evaluate the entire so-called Modern System, starting with 4. Nf3, as leading to equality: [5.0]. This, however, depends on Black's finding an adequate antidote to 7. a4.

14. Nc3

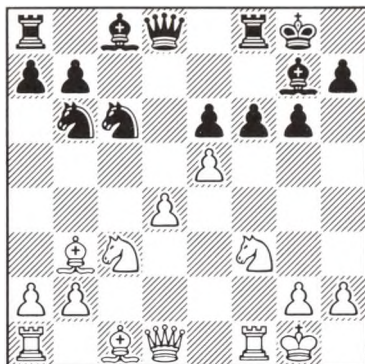


Diagram 109

The usual continuation here is 14. exf6 Qxf6 15. Be3 Nd5 16. Bf2 Nf4.



Diagram 110

After 16. ... Nf4

This is a complex, sharp position offering chances for both sides. (With a2-a4 and ... a7-a5 included, Alburst was less optimistic about Black's chances! Still, some recent games here went well for Black.)

The pawn sacrifice offered instead by his opponent wasn't a surprise for Lev. Back in 1981, Lubosh Kavalek had mentioned this idea to him, and later Alburst analyzed it extensively.

14. ... fxe5 15. Bg5 Qd7 16. dxe5 Nxe5 17. Nxe5

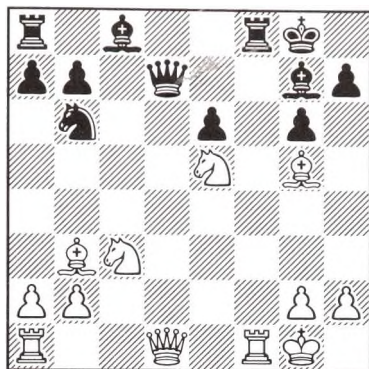


Diagram 111

Up to this point, Albur's opponent had spent more than an hour on his clock. Lev had used less than 15 minutes, most of it considering some deviation from the main line that he thought might force White to think even longer and to get into time pressure. (Albur considered, for instance, 15. ... Qc7, provoking 16. Nb5, but then he rejected it for positional reasons—the White knight comes to d6 or c7, with at least full compensation for a pawn for White [5.5].) Here a new idea came to mind—the one Albur actually played. (The usual continuation is 17. ... Bxe5 or 17. ... Qxd1 18. Raxd1 Bxe5, with an equal game; White has full compensation for the pawn, but no more).

He double-checked his innovation several times, as such ideas discovered at the board are often unsound. After all, Albur had spent many hours on this position at home, with no external pressure, and had not found—or rather had seen but rejected—the plan that occurred to him during the game. Isn't this a good reason for suspecting that the innovation is somehow flawed? Basically this is the correct way of thinking—with appropriate skepticism. Still, there are rules (trust your home analysis) and there are exceptions, as sometimes external pressure (the excitement of the struggle) can unleash your creativity.

After he had proved to himself that his intended innovation was at least as good as his old preparations, he played:

17. ... Rxf1! 18. Qxf1

As Alburt expected, Pupols spent more than 40 minutes here. He rejected 18. Kxf1, because after 18. ... Bxe5, Black wins a tempo by attacking the h2-pawn.

18. ... Qd4+! 19. Kh1 Qxe5

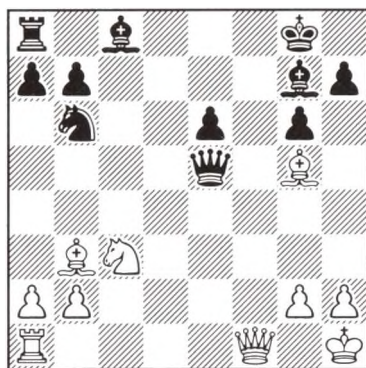


Diagram 112

During the game, as Alburt recalls, he was very pleased with his position, and evaluated it as [3.5] or at least [4.0]—only partial compensation for White for the sacrificed pawn. He saw that the natural 20. Bf4 Qf5 would be very good for Black, who would continue with 21. ... Bd7 and 22. ... Rf8. It was almost too good to be true and, thinking for White, Alburt realized that Pupols should deny him control of the f-file. After a few minutes, Pupols made the move Lev considered the strongest:

20. Be7

Alburt's reply was natural.

20. ... Bd7

By this point Alburt was already more skeptical, or rather, more objective, about his position. He realized that White had almost full, perhaps even full, compensation for the pawn. (This is also his current evaluation of this position: [4.9]. Therefore, White's pawn sacrifice 14. Nc3 isn't really bad, and the evaluation after 14. Nc3 should be [4.8-4.9], just slightly below total equality,

making this line a reasonable way of playing for a draw). 20. ... Qc7 deserves consideration, but Alburt chose a more natural move—in fact Alburt did so because he missed something ...

21. Re1 Qf5 22. Qe2

Of course, White can't win back a pawn here, as 22. Qxf5 gxf5 23. Bxe6+ Bxe6 24. Rxe6 loses a piece to 24. ... Re8.

22. ... Re8 23. Bd6 Qf6

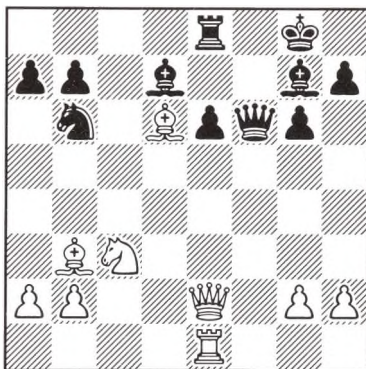


Diagram 113

Only when White played 23. Bd6 did Alburt realize that after 24. Rf1 his queen would be denied the e5- square. The game is now virtually equal.

24. Ne4? [2.5]

This move looks dangerous but in reality isn't. White gives up a second pawn in order to bring his knight into the action. However, his attack is not strong enough, whereas Black gains not only another pawn, but also extra maneuverability for his queen and an opportunity to exploit the weaknesses in White's defenses. And while there were no grounds for a decisive attack for White, neither was there reason to panic. After 24. Rf1 Qd4 25. Rd1, Black must either agree to a draw by repetition, or play for complications, as Alburt intended, with 25. ... Qh4. Still, as already mentioned, here White has nearly full, or even completely full, com-

pensation for the sacrificed pawn.

24. ... Qxb2 25. Qf3 Bc6 26. Rf1? [1.5]

This attack leads nowhere. The pawn-shove 26. h4 deserves attention, but it can't change the reality—Black, with two extra pawns, has excellent chances of winning the game.

26. ... Kh8! 27. Qg4? [1.0]

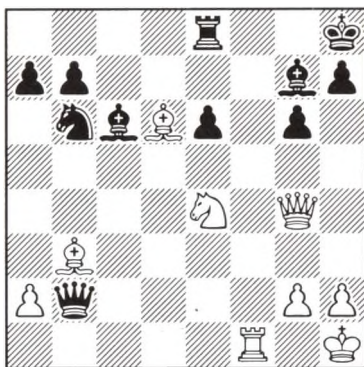


Diagram 114

This loses further material. However, the game was already completely lost.

27. ... Qd4

Prior to making this move, Alburt spent at least 15 minutes analyzing its consequences. It looks as though Black wins a piece, but White can (and did) continue ...

28. Bc2 Bxe4 29. Rd1

As already mentioned, Lev foresaw—and analyzed—this position before making his 27th move. He knew that he was winning and that the win should not be too difficult to find. In such a situation, one should be especially cautious not to drop a sure point—not to give the opponent extra chances of prolonging the struggle. Many games have been drawn, or even lost, starting with inaccuracies in completely won positions! After 29. Rd1, for instance, Black can win a third pawn: 29. ... Bxg2+. This Alburt

saw instantly. But White's two bishops and the weak pawns on e6 and b7 make Black's task of winning the game less than easy. And after all, he had plenty of time on the clock, so why not look for an instant kill? He found it (on the 27th move), and now he went for it.

29. ... Bf5

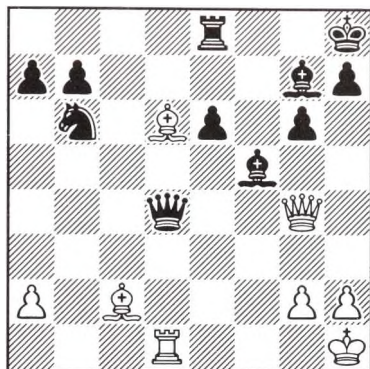


Diagram 115

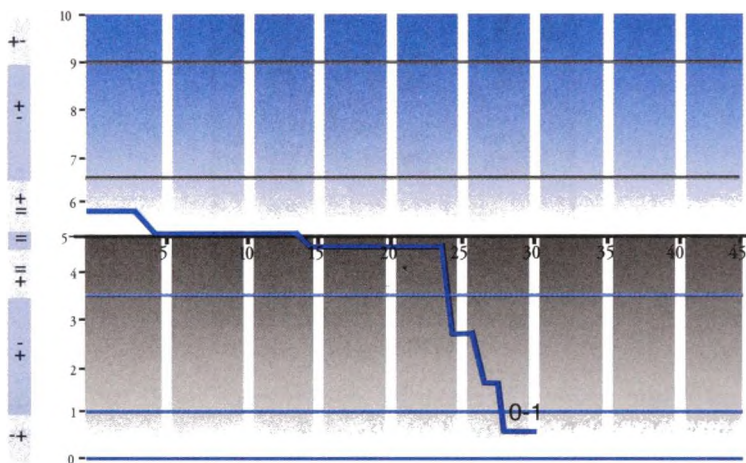
And White resigns, because he loses a piece in all variations; for example, 30. Rxd4 Bxg4 31. Rxg4 Rc8.

In this game, an innovation (17. ... Rxf1+) did not win instantly. Instead, Black gained a very slight edge in a completely unknown and very complicated position. White played very well for a while, maintaining almost adequate compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but he had to spend a lot of time solving all these problems. Facing imminent time pressure, he made his first serious error with 24. Ne4, which gave Black a second pawn and excellent winning chances. Two further errors soon followed, allowing Black to win this game with a little finesse (29. ... Bf5).

Finding an innovation, even a good innovation, is usually not enough to win the game. Further strong play and a degree of cooperation from your opponent are also required.

GRAPHING THE EVALUATIONS

Let's take a look at how one could graph this game. In a vertical line to the far left are the rough zones generally indicated by the traditional marks. To the right of these are the SOPR numbers, 10-0, from top to bottom. The move numbers are indicated in a horizontal line at the bottom. The blue line moving across the graph indicates the varying evaluation of the game position. The farther the line dips toward the bottom of the graph, the better things are for Black.



Try evaluating some of your own games with the SOPR method. Then make them into graphs by plotting the SOPR numbers of each game and connecting them. Do you see any repeated patterns? For example, do you often get an inferior position during the opening? Do you too often allow your opponent to save his game in the ending? Do your graphs show that you gain and give away important advantages, indicating that you have to “win” a game several times?

This approach will provide a new perspective on the progress of your games—and you'll get some practical insights into the process of winning, drawing or losing a chess game.

Chapter 21

Joseph Dorfman

Updating the Steinitzian Universe

A theoretical summit on chess training took place in New York City on September 17, 2000. GM Joseph Dorfman, one of the most successful teachers and long recognized by the world's best players as one of the deepest thinkers in chess, met with three-time U.S. Champion Lev Alburt and his students. Invited by Alburt, Dorfman came to the U.S. from his home in Cannes, France, to discuss his new formulation of chess theory—a long-awaited updating of the theories of Wilhelm Steinitz.

Steinitz is to modern chess what Sir Isaac Newton is to current cosmology. In 1687, Newton laid down the famous Laws of Motion that described the visible universe accurately enough to stand relatively unchanged for almost three centuries, until this overly billiard-ball-like, action-and-reaction “Newtonian” universe was updated by Einstein and others. In fact, in recent decades, this updating and expanding has seemed relentless, as any reader of Stephen W. Hawking can attest.

Not so much the case with Steinitz, who at the time of the



Wilhelm Steinitz

American Civil War left Prague for Vienna, setting out to be a journalist and winding up winning the chess world championship. (How many chess journalists have reversed the order of these career goals?) His 19th Century principles have been quoted and re-quoted in modern texts as the seminal word. True, Nimzovich, in the 1925 *My System*, gave us some practical and new ideas, but his book was, despite the title, hardly systematic. Dorfman reminds us that Nimzovich's fellow Copenhagen resident, GM Bent Larsen, reacted this way to the famous book—"There is no system."

What's more, Steinitz, as great as his contributions were, merely listed his principles. He established no hierarchy to help us know when one guiding rule takes precedence over another. Perhaps Dorfman's most original contribution is establishing just such a ranking of principles.

CHAMPION AND THEORETICIAN

Dorfman was born in Zitomir, Ukraine on May 1, 1952. In 1977, the year before being awarded his GM title, he became Soviet Champion (along with Boris Gulko). His many successes at top-level events confirmed his membership in the world chess elite. From the beginning of his career, Dorfman was recognized as one of the great chess thinkers, seeing internal connections and making new generalizations.

In the 1974 Ukraine Championship, Dorfman and (the slightly older and then considerably more established) Albur were paired near the end of the tournament. A draw would virtually clinch the title for Lev. Albur's coach Ed Duchovny, a mutual friend of the two players, wanted to arrange a draw. Lev was skeptical of the need. But Duchovny told him how impressed he was with the younger player's profundity.

"He's very deep," an awed Duchovny told Lev, "I've seen him

set up the pieces in their starting position and stare at them for half an hour!”

“You haven’t convinced me,” Alburt said. “But if he starts studying an *empty* board, let me know.”

In the end, it was Dorfman who insisted on playing for blood, and he lost. He was, however, to get his revenge on more than one future occasion.

COACH DORFMAN—AND A STUDENT NAMED KASPAROV

Even very early in his life, Dorfman was a sought-after trainer. Alexander Beliavsky enrolled his help from 1980 to 1982. But then Dorfman provided crucial aid between 1984-87 to his most famous client, Garry Kasparov, as he captured the World Championship from Karpov. Dorfman was the official trainer of the Ukrainian team from 1987 to 1989. In 1990, he left Ukraine, settling in Cannes, coaching the French Olympic Team in 1990 and 1992. He’s worked with GMs Joel Lautier, Veselin Topalov, and Boris Gelfand, and coached Etienne Bacrot to his GM title. He also teaches the merely mortal. In two years, he’s brought 36 amateurs to the master title.

A COMPLETE ALGORITHM (FOR HUMANS) THAT FINDS MOVES

Dorfman has been using his system, with outstanding practical results, for many years in his playing and teaching. In 1998, he wrote down the basics of his ideas in a French-language book, *La Methode aux Echecs*. The title, *The Method to Chess*, conveys the central thesis. More than a mere expansion of Steinitz, Dorfman attempts to give us every coach’s and player’s dream—the first real algorithm or formula for successful chess playing. Dorfman provides a system of rules, complete with a hierarchy of values, that enables us to find the right move at key moments in the game—those he calls “critical positions.” And, with some practice, none of this is nearly as complicated as remembering the best defense to the Blackmar-Diemer gambit!

A WORD ABOUT RULES— THE AMATEUR'S FRIEND

The rest of this brief chapter will introduce Dorfman's actual system. As we'll see, Albur's American students raved about Dorfman's techniques. Students love "rules" and general principles. Sometimes teachers are cautious of over-generalizing, and thereby deprive their charges of rules that work a great percentage of the time. Let's keep in mind a story about the great Doctor Siegbert Tarrasch, who was born the same year that Steinitz played in his first international tournament, 1862, and who became the first great popularizer of chess principles.



Siegbert Tarrasch

One of Tarrasch's readers once wrote to him, taking exception that Herr Doktor had just won an important game by putting a knight on the edge of the board, in violation of his widely proselytized principle that a "knight on the rim is grim." The puzzled correspondent wanted to know whether Tarrasch had changed his mind or the move was a mistake. The dogmatic Tarrasch replied that he could in the future add to all his statements the proviso "unless it's not so," but this would make his books harder to read.

After all, there are very few absolute rules. In a given position, a knight can be stronger than a queen. The much bandied-about principle that the bishop pair is superior to bishop and knight is true only about 60% of the time.

If a rule is true most of the time, it's very valuable. If it works a very high percentage of the time, it's the amateur's best friend.

THE THREE-STEP DORFMAN SYSTEM

The system itself can be divided into three steps (we'll define italicized terms later):

1. Recognize the *critical positions*;
2. The heart of the method: Analyze these positions to

find out who is better *statically*—this is where Dorfman’s four-tier hierarchy helps;

- ♟ 3. If you are better statically, look for a static move that preserves your advantage—if you are worse statically, look for a *dynamic* move that will lead to changes in the static assessment.

RECOGNIZING CRITICAL POSITIONS

Dorfman divides a game into two types of positions, *technical* and *critical*. In a technical position, an experienced player will know what to do—for example, centralizing his king in an endgame. Critical positions are not so clear, the choices are important, and the stakes are high. They’re positions that amount to red flags warning us to think hard. He explains that critical positions are common in three kinds of situations:

- ♟ 1. When either opponent initiates a voluntary exchange of pieces (forced recaptures don’t count)—the more valuable the pieces, the more critical the position;
- ♟ 2. When either player can make a change in pawn structure, especially in the center;
- ♟ 3. If a player comes to the end of a more or less forced series of moves—this could be a combination or obviously strong moves for both sides—and is now confronted with a choice.

Of course, a reasonable reaction is to allow that some positions are more critical than others, and there is no clearly absolute border between technical and critical—for example, where to develop an important piece could be considered both technical and critical. But let’s continue with Dorfman’s ideas.

WHO IS BETTER STATICALLY?

Before he can logically find the proper move in a critical position, a player must separate the static (enduring, strategic) elements from the dynamic (temporary, tactical) features. If you’ve been around for a while, you’ll recognize the static versus dynamic distinction from former world champion Max Euwe’s works.

But Dorfman puts the ideas to new use. In fact, Dorfman says that knowing who is better statically and dynamically is as important (sometimes even more important) than knowing who stands “better” in the overall way that our typical “+” and “-” notations record.

Finding out who is better statically is at the core of the system. Sometimes it’s easy to discover. Dorfman’s rule of thumb here is an original contribution: when one side can improve his static position while the other side can’t, the player who can improve is better statically—like in the next example.

Sometimes taking into account the tradeoffs of complicated strengths and weaknesses of the static elements is too difficult. At this point the hierarchy comes to the rescue. (See page 281.)

PETRIENKOV—DORFMAN

USSR, 1984

BLACK TO MOVE

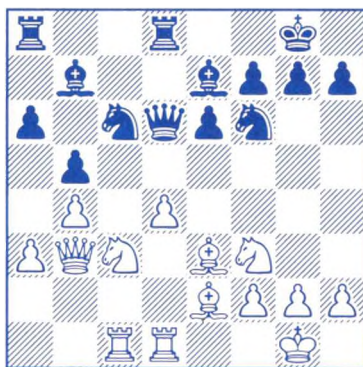


Diagram 116

Here Black recognizes the position as critical—natural moves have come to an end; finding the right plan is now difficult. Then he determines that he is better statically—his pawn structure is superior, for one thing. Now he needs to plug in step three.

FINDING THE MOVE

Once the assessment is made of who is better statically, the *kind*

of move that should be made can be derived. If you're better statically, look for candidate moves that are static (that is, that retain the *static* elements the way they are) and that will maintain your advantage or improve your position. However, if you determine that you are worse off statically, look for moves that are *dynamic* in nature to change the static elements of the position. In either case, you should make a mental list of candidate moves that fulfill the requirements of the system. Then choose the one you find best in the situation.

There are lots of possibilities. Sometimes you can improve your already better static position. Sometimes you can equalize a position that is inferior statically. Sometimes you can go from a worse static position to an unclear and dynamic position. Certainly, there isn't always a cure for your position's ills. Sometimes the system will lead you to realize that your best chance is simply to find the most stubborn, resilient defensive moves and tough it out.

In Petrienkov–Dorfman above, Black realizes he was better statically and so needs to stick to moves that improve his position without changing the static elements. This leads him to find a maneuver that increases his advantage in a way that his opponent cannot. He decides to bring his knight on c6 to d5, centralizing it while blockading White's isolated pawn. (Yes, the system can generate moves that Nimzovich would have endorsed.)

15. ... h6

A prophylactic to suppress a dynamic possibility for White. Black wants to play ... Bf8, ... Ne7, ... Ned5. But playing 15. ... Bf8 immediately would allow 16. Bg5, threatening to mangle Black's pawn structure, changing the static elements. So Black prevents the idea.

16. Rc2 Bf8 17. Rcd2 Ne7

Just when White threatened to push and liquidate his isolated d-pawn, Black's maneuver puts two more defenders on d5, laying on six defenders to four.

18. Ne5 Ned5

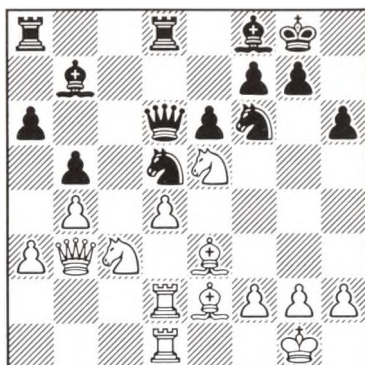


Diagram 117

“Black has consolidated his position. His static advantage is uncontested,” writes Dorfman.

Let’s look at a position in which the player on move reaches the “other” conclusion.

MURCHED—DORFMAN

Palma de Majorca, 1989

BLACK TO MOVE

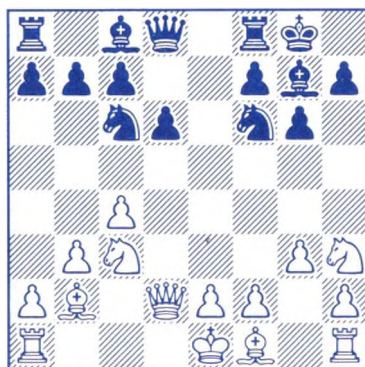


Diagram 118

Here Black decides he is in a critical position (once again, easy-to-find moves are at an end) and further finds that he is statically worse. He needs dynamic moves that shake up the stasis.

9. ... a5 10. Nf4 a4 11. Nxa4 Ne4

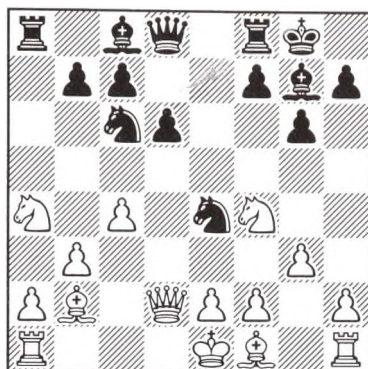


Diagram 119

12. Qc1 Nd4 13. Bg2 Re8 14. 0-0 Bg4 15. f3 g5

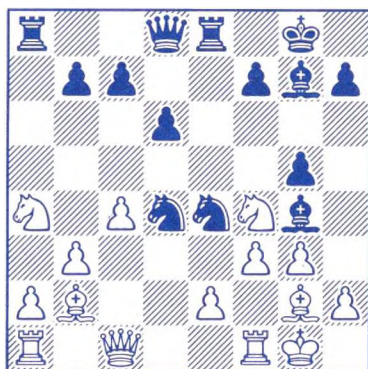


Diagram 120

The knight on f4 can't move because then ... Nxe2+ forks the White royalty. Rather than suffer an inferior position, Black used a dynamic move to reach an approximately equal and highly unclear game (which he later won).

“LITTLE RULES” ALONG THE WAY

Obviously, this is the briefest of introductions to a system that sets out to be the first truly comprehensive one for finding the right moves. But even here, we should mention that Dorfman gives lots of original advice that his system has helped him to dis-

cover. For example, take his rule on playing with the two bishops. Dorfman tells us to place our pawns on squares of the same color as your unopposed bishop. Like many profundities, this seems simple enough after someone has said it for the first time. Dorfman showed one of Lev's students the following example, the position after 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 g6 4. Bxc6 dxc6 5. 0-0

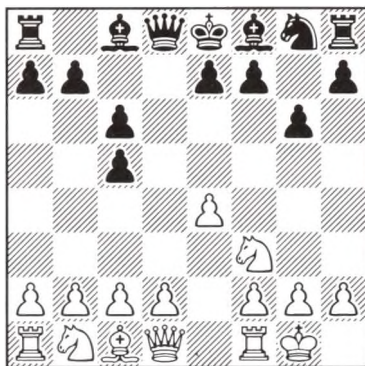


Diagram 121

Adhering to Dorfman's rule, we can find an interesting plan here, aimed at getting his g-pawn to the light-square g4—... f6, ... g5, ... g4. Dorfman points out that if White reacts with h3 to prevent the key move ... g4, Black's plan is especially effective.

A PRACTICAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS

Dorfman in his dogmatic approach—one that the students loved, by the way—reminded us a bit of the stories of the legendary Tarrasch himself. Without seeing them before, Dorfman took games played by the American “test” students and showed how his system would have helped find the right moves. GM Genna Sosonko even offered one of his wild and woolly tactical melees to see how the system performed. It again turned up the best moves even in this unusual test.

THE GUINEA PIGS THRIVED, BUT SOME PREFER THE OLD PELLETS

Lev's students found both Dorfman and his theory extremely practical and helpful. The ultimate test, of course, is how it works

Dorfman's "Scale of Diminishing Values"

- 1. Position of the king*
- 2. Material balance*
- 3. Who would be better after the exchange of queens*
- 4. Pawn structure*

Although Dorfman notes that it would be both impossible and unproductive to make a separate "sub" hierarchy within this fourth and last element, it is important to know that he includes within the consideration of pawn structure some factors that we may normally think of as dynamic. In doing so, he seems quite logical and correct. He includes semi-open files (they are, after all, breaks in the pawn skeletons), bad pieces (pawns make the piece), the type of center, and space (pawns are the anti-space).

The students who were the American testing grounds for Dorfman's theories ranged from C-player to master. They were quite enthusiastic about the system, but had the most questions regarding the relative positions of numbers one and two on the scale. What if one side simply had an extra rook? Don't extra pieces count for a lot?

First of all, the scale is intended for deciding close calls about who is better statically. But second, Dorfman once again seems logically correct. We all know games in which one side was mated while his extra material looked on balefully. King safety has to be the number one priority.

for you. Does his theory really help you find the best move? A practical player should be eclectic. If a new idea helps, he should use it. If, after trying it out, the new system doesn't seem productive, he should stick with more traditional approaches. Of course, the very act of trying out a new way of looking at chess can in itself broaden his understanding.

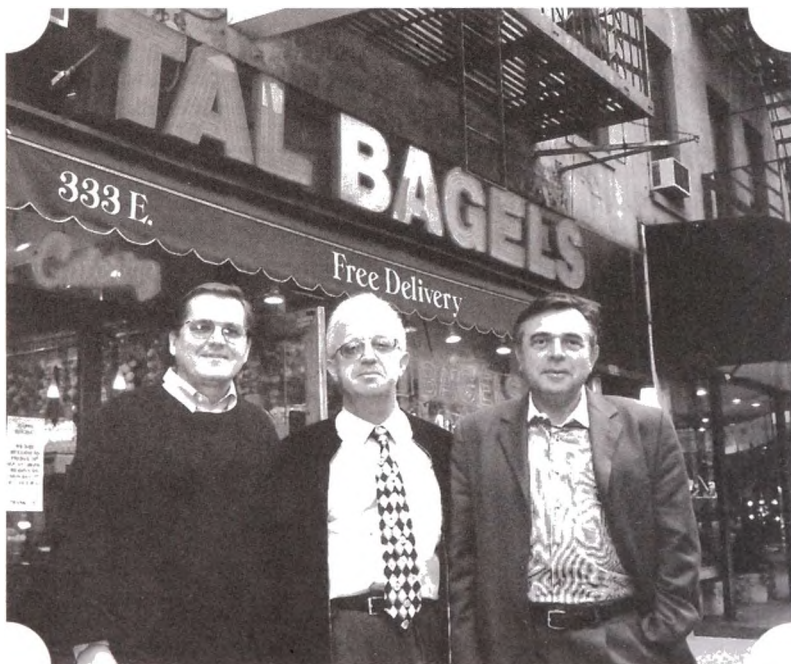
DORFMAN TELLS US TO PLACE OUR PAWNS ON SQUARES OF THE SAME COLOR AS OUR UNOPPOSED BISHOP. THIS SEEMS SIMPLE ENOUGH AFTER SOMEONE HAS SAID IT FOR THE FIRST TIME.



Writer-player Al Lawrence, for one, found that the Dorfman system, and the points made along the way, taught him some important, brand-new ideas in just a few hours. And in chess, there's nothing more valuable than the one-two punch of a practical and new idea.



Joseph Dorfman



Co-authors Al Lawrence (left) and Lev Alburt (right), with Joseph Dorfman in New York City in front of "Tal Bagels"—no connection with the world champion discussed in Chapter 2.

Art Director

Jami Anson

Jami Anson has lent her creative hand to assist in the design and production of Lev Alburt's books. She is the winner of many Chess Journalist of America awards and the Cramer Award for best chess photography. Her photographs have appeared in magazines such as *Time Magazine* and *TV Guide*, as well as in many newspapers and books.

Jami has designed art for many firms—Sterling Publishing, McGraw Hill, Excalibur Electronics, Chess n' Bridge, ChessCafe, OutExcel Corp., Lev Alburt, Lindberg Associates and Seiko.

After 17 years of designing and producing *Chess Life* and *Schoolmates* for the U.S. Chess Federation, Jami started her own design firm—JadanDesign.

During her tenure at *Chess Life*, she maintained and built up the research library and photos that span chess history from the early 1800s to the present day. She is currently creating a cultural center in her home town from an abandoned church called Little Apple Restoration. This project will include classes in art, music, theatre and, of course, chess.

Contact Jami Anson at:
jadandesign@aol.com



*Winner
of many awards
for design,
photography
and layout*

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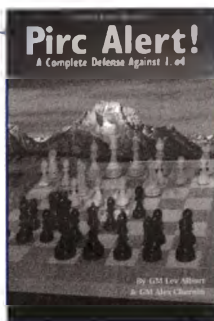
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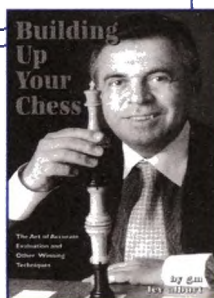


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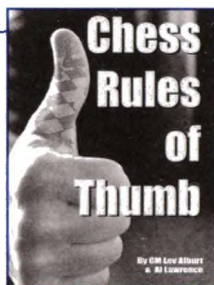


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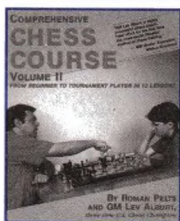


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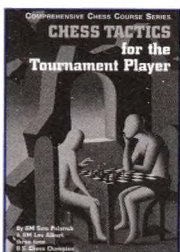
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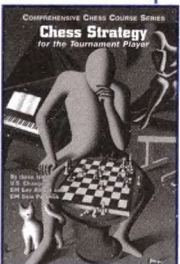
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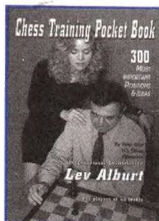


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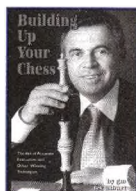


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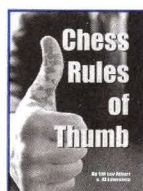
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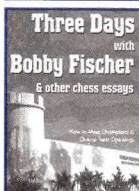


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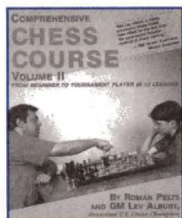
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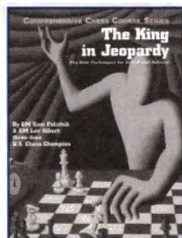
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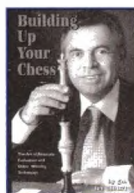
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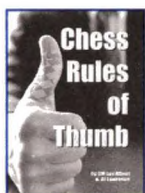


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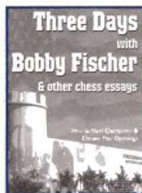
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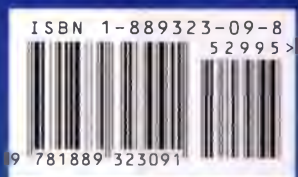
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